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# A HISTORY

OF THE

# TOWN OF GRAVESEND, N. Y.

BY

Rev. A. P. STOCKWELL.

AND OF

# CONEY ISLAND,

BY

WM. H. STILLWELL, Esq.

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BROOKLYN, N. Y.

1884.

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# HISTORY OF THE 1748537 TOWN OF GRAVESEND.

BY REV. A. Stockwell, A. M.

**GEOGRAPHY, Topography, Soil, etc.**—The town of Gravesend, by age and position, is worthy a prominent place in the History of Kings County.

Containing within its boundaries, probably the most popular seaside resort in the country—viz.: *Coney Island*—it has assumed of late an importance entirely unknown to the first two hundred and thirty years of its existence.

It is triangular in form, its base resting upon the Atlantic Ocean on the south, its apex adjoining Flatbush on the north, and is bounded east by the town of Flatlands, and west by New Utrecht.

Its nearness to two of the largest commercial centres in America promises, in the near future, a growth vastly more rapid than during any period of its past history; while its healthful climate, and present rapid-transit accommodations, will doubtless render it an attractive place of residence for the business men of New York and Brooklyn.

It occupies the most southerly portion of Kings county, and is some seven miles from Fulton ferry; while its northern boundary is only about two miles from the southern city limits of Brooklyn.

Its surface is mostly level, yet with a sufficient slope towards the sea to make possible a complete system of drainage.

The soil, though somewhat light and sandy, is yet very productive; and, with careful tillage and generous fertilizing, will, under favorable circumstances, produce two fair crops.

The climate is remarkably healthful and agreeable. The inhabitants are rarely, if ever, exposed to any dangerous epidemic, and notable longevity is the rule rather than the exception.

The atmosphere is so modified by the influence of the sea that the temperature is usually cooler in summer and warmer in winter, by several degrees, than we find it further inland. The weather must be extremely cold for the mercury to fall below zero; while, in

summer, the cooling, delightful sea-breeze, which invariably springs up in the afternoon, generally makes the hottest days tolerable, and even comfortable.

**Settlement.**—It was, probably, upon the soil of Gravesend that the foot of white men first trod in this State. (See chapter on Coney Island). The first permanent settlement of the town dates back to the year 1643; although there may have been individuals who occupied land within the town-boundaries a few years earlier, as we shall have occasion to notice hereafter.

While all the other towns in Kings county were settled by the Dutch, who came over from Holland under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company, Gravesend was first settled by a colony of English, under the leadership of Lady Deborah Moody, a woman of considerable wealth and education, who afterwards took a prominent part in the administration of public affairs.

The free enjoyment of opinion in religious matters, the mild laws, the "freedom and exemptions" offered to settlers, the richness of the soil, and the salubrity of the climate, all rendered the Nieuw Netherlands an attractive place of settlement to those who, having left Old England for the purpose of obtaining religious freedom, had found, to their surprise and grief, in New England, the same intolerance from which they had thought to escape. The persecuted in England had, in turn, become the persecutors here, as soon as circumstances afforded the opportunity. As has been well said by J. W. GERARD, Esq., in a discourse on "The Lady Deborah Moody," before the *New York Historical Society*, May, 1880, "the practice and the principles of the Puritan fathers became far from harmonious. The rigid lines of their ecclesiastical faith were drawn as strictly and maintained almost as ruthlessly as in the fatherland; and the governing authority exacted conformity in spiritual matters as the condition of civil freedom. Those who had been branded as heretics stigmatized others as heretics, for differences in theological abstractions, and even for non-conformity,



to church-routine. \* \* \* Inquisition was made into men's private judgments as well as into their declarations and practice. \* \* \* Toleration was preached against as a sin in rulers which would bring down the judgment of heaven upon the land.

\* \* \* Non-conformists were scourged and fined for their ideas, no matter how mildly expressed; and even if they met together privately, to partake of communion, they were disenfranchised and imprisoned. \* \* \* Any sympathy expressed for the sufferings of the victims, or criticisms made on the severe action of the magistrates, was visited with fines and scourgings. Any question of the authority of any part of the Biblical history was visited with scourging; and a second offence with death. Many of the English colonists removed to the Dutch colony for freedom of conscience and liberty of worship."

Among those thus compelled to seek a new home was the Lady Deborah Moody, widow of Sir Henry Moody, of Garsden, in Wiltshire, and one of the baronets created by King James, in 1622. She was the daughter of Walter Dunch, a member of Parliament in Queen Elizabeth's time; as, also, was her uncle, at a later period. Both in and out of Parliament her father's family had been open and avowed champions of popular liberty and constitutional rights. Sir Henry Moody died about 1632. It is related in *Lewis' History of Lynn*, Mass., that in 1635, about five years before leaving England, Lady Moody had made herself obnoxious to the law by violating a penal statute which forbade any person residing beyond a specified time from their own home. This produced from the Court of the Star Chamber an order that "Dame Deborah Moody and others should return to their hereditaments in forty days, in the good example necessary to the poorer classes;" her offence being that she had simply gone from her country residence to live for a short time in London. It is not strange that she chafed under the unlawful restraints of such a civil and ecclesiastical despotism, and that she longed for a home in a land and among a people where the most sacred rights of humanity were properly respected. In 1640 she emigrated to Massachusetts, and April 5th united with the Church at Salem. May 13, 1840, the General Court granted her 500 acres of land for a plantation; and, in 1641, she purchased the farm of Dep-Gov. John Humfrey, called Swampscott, near Lynn, for which she paid £1100. She soon found, however, that her hopes of religious peace and freedom were delusive; for, having imbibed the belief taught by Roger Williams, that infant baptism was not an ordinance of divine origin, and that it should be restricted to adults, she was duly "admonished." Being still unconvinced of the erroneous nature of her views, she was excommunicated. In 1642 she was "presented" by the Quarterly Court for holding these views. Harassed, annoyed, "admonished," excommunicated, "presented," in 1643 she, with her son Sir Henry, John

Tilton and wife, and a few close friends, bade farewell to Massachusetts, and sought, among the strangers of Nieuw Amsterdam, speaking a language as foreign to her as were their manners and customs, an asylum where she might enjoy peace and happiness, without sacrificing her conscientious convictions. An extract from Gov. *Winthrop's Journal* indicates the high regard in which she was still held among her New England neighbors, although "disfellowshipped" by her own church. "The Ladie Moodye, a wise, an anciently religious woman, being taken with the error of denying baptism to infants, was dealt with by many of the elders and others, and admonished by the Church of Salem (whereof she was a member); but persisting still, and to avoid further trouble, etc., she removed to the Dutch, against the advice of her friends." Here she found, to her surprise and joy, a number of her own countrymen who had sought, near the fort, an asylum from savage hostilities. On the eastern shore of Manhattan Island, about opposite the lower end of Blackwell's Island, and at the place known as "Deutil Bay," had sprung up quite a settlement of English residents. Among the earliest of these was Nicholas Stillwell, or "Nicholas the Tobacco Planter," as he is often called in the old records. His experience of England's and New England's intolerance had been similar to that of Lady Moody; and he had secured here a plantation, on which he had erected a stone house, which became the nucleus of an infant settlement, known as "the English settlement at Hopton." But the policy of the Dutch Director-General, Kieft, toward the Indians, had precipitated a general war; and the English settlers at Hopton had fled for safety under the walls of the fort at Nieuw Amsterdam. Here they were found by Lady Moody and her associates, and the two parties naturally fusing together, were invited by the Director-General to select from the unappropriated lands of the W. I. Co., a location for a new settlement. The present town of Gravesend was the site selected for their new home, by a committee of their number appointed for the purpose, and a patent was issued by the Director-General and Council in the summer of 1643. Of this patent but little is known, as the original cannot be found; but it is so referred to in subsequent documents as to leave no doubt of there having been such a patent.

Thus began the settlement of the town, under the leadership of a woman of education and refinement, whose force of character, combined with her uprightness of life, made her a power for good with those among whom she moved. Both by nature and grace she was fitted to be a pioneer in such an enterprise. For sixteen years she went in and out among the people, prominent in their councils, and often intrusted with important public responsibilities, which prove the respect and confidence of her associates. She seems also to have enjoyed the friendship of Gov. Stuyvesant, who several times sought her advice in matters of



great public importance. Even the nomination of the three town-magistrates was, on one or two occasions, intrusted by the Director-General to her good judgment. He also availed himself of her kind offices, on another occasion, in quelling an incipient rebellion, raised by some of her English associates against the Dutch authority.

She owned a large tract of land in Gravesend, as we shall hereafter see; and we find, by the old town-record, that in November, 1648, she rented all her "broken up" land, for three years, to one Thos. Cornewill, reserving, however, one piece for her own use. She also furnished him with 4 cows and 4 oxen, receiving as rent, per year, 10 skipples of wheat for the land, and 60 gilders for the use of the animals.

Much doubt has existed as to the time and place of Lady Moody's death.

Some have thought it possible that she went from Gravesend to Virginia, with her son Sir Henry, and ended her days there. Others, that she went to Monmouth Co., N. J., with a colony from Gravesend, who obtained a patent for a large tract of land in the above county in 1665.

Among the old records of the town we have found some data which seem clearly to determine the fact of her death and burial in Gravesend. The record of the probate of the will of one Edward Brown, November 4, 1658, states that Lady Moody, with two other persons named, was "granted power by the Court to administer upon the estate of the said Edward Brown." She must, therefore, have been living at the above date, and in Gravesend. It is also recorded that Sir Henry Moody, some seven months later, May 11, 1659, conveyed a piece of land to John Johnson, which is described as being "the gift of inheritance from his deceased mother, Deborah Moody, patentee."

Facsimile of signature of Sir Henry Moody, Junior.

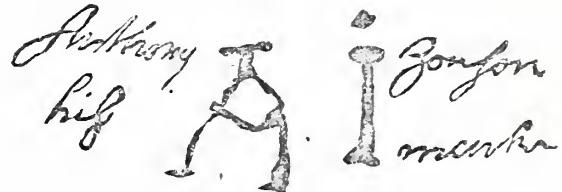
This fixes, beyond question, the time of her death within seven months, viz., between Nov. 4, 1658, and May 11, 1659. The strong probability is, therefore, that she died at Gravesend, about the beginning of the year 1659, and was buried in one of the nameless graves of the old burial-place, which now, after more than two and a quarter centuries, retain no vestige of inscriptions to indicate whose dust slumbers beneath the sod.

**Name.**—With regard to the name, *Gravesend*, given to the town, Thompson, in his *History of Long Island*, states that it was so called, by the early English settlers, from the town of that name in England, from which they sailed on their departure for America.

This theory is plausible only upon the supposition that Lady Moody and her associates actually made Gravesend their point of departure for New England. Whether this be true or not, since Gravesend was an important commercial town on the river Thames, in the County of Kent, it would not be strange if the early English settlers should be desirous of transmitting the name to the new settlement which they were about to found on this side of the ocean. This seems all the more probable, since they evidently intended to make the modern Gravesend, from its favorable position, a commercial town of no little importance. There is, however, no corroborative evidence of this origin of the name. Another supposition, which we believe to be the true one, is that Gov. Kieft, when granting them permission to settle here, or later, when he issued the patent for the land, called the town Gravesend, from the old Dutch town, *Gravensande* (the Count's beach), on the river Maas, in Holland, which may have been dear to the Governor as being the place of his nativity, or from early associations.

**Pioneer Settlers.**—Before the proper settlement of Gravesend by Lady Moody and her associates, there were two persons who took up farms within what afterwards became the town-boundaries, and for which they held individual patents.

The first patent, or ground-brief, was issued by Gov. Kieft, May 27, 1643, giving possession (retrospectively from August 1st, 1639) to one Antonie Jansen Van Salee, 100 morgen (200 acres) of land, one part to be called the *Old Bowery*, and the other the *12 morgen*.



Facsimile of Anthony Jansen's mark.

According to an old map, now on file in the town-clerk's office at Gravesend, the "Old Bowery" part of this farm was situated at the western part of the town, now covered wholly, or for the most part, by the village of Unionville; while the "12 morgen" (by which name the land is known to this day) lay a little distance from it in a south-easterly direction. Between these parcels of land lay a large strip of marsh or meadow-ground, worthy of special mention in connection with a certain "Neck" of land (or rather at that time of sand-hills) running south from the "Old Bowery," because of the legal efforts afterwards made for the possession of both.

This neck and meadow became a bone of contention for years afterwards between the inhabitants of Gravesend, on the one hand, who claimed it as belonging to their original patent; and, on the other, Francis De Brayn (afterwards called Brown), the successor of An-



tonie Jansen Van Salee (Anthony Johnson), who also claimed it as included in the 100 morgen granted to the latter.

Finally, June, 1669, by request of both parties to the suit, the matter was referred, by the Court of General Sessions, to Governor Lovelace, for decision. John Clanning and Jacques Corteleau, the two referees appointed by the governor, reported that Mr. Brown "hath no meadow in his patent, but is short of his 100 morgen of land which he purchased, and we do verily believe it doth not, in right, belong to Gravesend." They recommended, therefore, that one-third thereof be allowed to Brown, "to make up his 100 morgen of land, and lying before his door, within a stone's throw, he paying for the ditching which is yet to be done; that one-third go to Gravesend "for the ditching they have done," and the remaining one-third was left to his Excellency's disposal. In accordance with this report of the referees, Gov. Lovelace issued his "Edict," as it was called, a certified copy of which is before us, and is as follows:

"The Governrs Judgement & Determination concerning ye land in question, between ye Inhabitants of Gravesend and Francis Brown."

"Whereas there hath been a Controversy or Matter in Difference between ye Inhabitants of ye town of Gravesend & Francis Brown, alias de Bruyn, concerning a parcell of Meadow ground adjoining to Twelve Morgen of upland in ye patten of ye said Francis Brown, specified, as also about a certaine Neck of land endorsed upon ye old ground brief of ye said Brown, but claymed [by] ye [said] Gravesend as granted to them longe before, & being wthin ye lymitts of their patten. Upon Examination and due consideration had of ye premises, I do adjudge that if Francis Brown have his complemt of Twelve Morgen of upland, he hath no right or clayme to ye meadow, yett in regard a third parte or proportion thereof is already layd to him, he is to have and quietly enjoy ye land, and ye remainder or othr two third partes are to continue and be to ye Inhabitants of Gravesend. And as to ye Neck of land Endorsed upon ye old patten of the said Francis Brown, & also claymed by ye said Inhabitants of Gravesend as aforesaid, I doe think fitt, since it hath hitherto or most usually been enjoyed in Common between ye Town & ye said Farm that it continue so still, and this shall be ye conclusion and final determination of ye said controversy or Matter in Difference unless both or either of ye partys thinking themselves aggrieved do sue for redress therein at ye next Cort of Assizes, where ye law is open for them, but after that tyme it shall be a barre to any further pretences.

"Given undr my hand and seale at Fort James in New York, this 23d day of August, in ye 21 yeare of his Magties Raigne, Anno Dom. 1669.

Sgd FRANCIS LOVELACE."

This, however, did not prove to be the "conclusion and final determination" of the matter; for, 120 years later, Albert Voorhees claimed an exclusive right to this ground, by virtue of purchase from Brown. He also attempted to enforce his claim by preventing Gravesend people from erecting their fish-huts, drying their nets, etc., on the beach along the property. This brought him in direct conflict with his fellow-citizens;

who claimed, by virtue of their patent, the right to "fish, hawk and gun along and upon" the property. To determine their several rights, Mr. V. brought an action for trespass against sundry townsmen, which was tried the 18th of September, 1789, in the Supreme Court, at Flatbush. Aaron Burr was the town's attorney, and the case was tried before a jury of seven Queen's county men. The town was willing to concede to Mr. V. a patentee's right, viz., 1.39 part of the commonage, but not the exclusive right which he claimed. The trial resulted in a verdict for the town; the judgment being affirmed by the October term of the court, with costs. Col. Burr's summing-up, as shown by his minutes, was clear and forcible; his charges (as per receipts, now extant) were £20, besides £15 "for advice lately given and as a general retainer." Mr. Crosby, hotel-keeper at Flatbush, also received for £30 "for entertaining the people of Gravesend;" and "also the account of Col. Burr;" and "40 shillings" from Mr. Roger Strong (a lawyer who assisted in the case in behalf of the town), "for wine, punch, &c." How will this compare with some recent civic law-suits?

Thus the matter rested for about 50 years longer, when, in 1843, another law-suit was tried upon the question of title. David Davis, then in possession of the property, began an ejectment suit against Thomas Hicks and Coart Van Sicklen, as representing the town.

At a special town meeting held January 13th, 1843, a committee was appointed to defend the suit, and \$350 voted for legal expenses. This trial, like the other two, was a complete vindication of the right of the town to use the ground for fishing-purposes.

In this case Gabriel Furman was attorney for the town. The plaintiff, however, appealed the case, and the town, for some reason, failed to meet it, and judgment was obtained against them by default. The matter was finally settled by the town paying to the plaintiff a sum of money sufficient to pay his cost of litigation.

For the present time, and indeed for the last fifteen or twenty years, the town seems to have given up, by tacit consent, all her right and interest in the land in question; and the successors of Francis de Bruyn and Albert Voorhees to-day hold quiet and undisputed possession. Indeed, the few who have used the ground for fishing purposes, for the last few years, have paid, without remonstrance, an annual ground-rent of from \$5 to \$30. It is probable, therefore, that whatever rights the town formerly had in this property, are now gone past recovery. Some of the suits which have arisen out of this matter are still pending.

The next patent, in order of time, was that granted by Gov. Kieft to Guysbert Op Dyck for Conyne (Coney) Island, and Conyne Hook, afterwards called Guysbert's Island. This patent bears date 1644, and was for 44 morgen, or 88 acres. This land was also claimed after-



wards by the town as included in the patent of Gravesend. Op Dyek came to this country in 1635; in 1642 was Commissary of Provisions for the colony, and for some time had charge of the fort on the Connecticut river, where he made much trouble with the English. We mention him again, in connection with Coney Island.

Then came the patent of Robert Pennoyer, dated Nov. 29, 1645. (State Secretary's office, *Dutch Book of Patents*, page 144.) We learn from a certified translation of this patent, found among the old papers of the town, that the farm was "situated between the land of Antony Jansen and Meladie [My Lady] Moody, amounting together to eighty-nine *Morgen* four hundred and forty rods," and the grant was made, "with this express condition and agreement, that he, Robert Pennoyer, shall acknowledge the noble Lords Directors to be his Lords and Patrons under the Sovereignty of their High Mightinesses, the States-General, and hereto be obedient to their Director and Council, as it becomes good and faithful citizens."

**First Town Patent.**—We now come to the first patent of the town of Gravesend, granted by Gov. Kieft, and dated Dec. 19, 1645. It is remarkable for being, probably, the only one of its kind, where a woman heads the list of patentees named. It is another evidence, also, of the prominent position which Lady Moody held among the early settlers, and of the respect shown her by the Dutch authorities. It is worthy of note that liberty of conscience was also freely conceded to the first settlers of Gravesend; they were granted by Gov. Kieft freedom of worship "without magisterial or ministerial interference."

This first patent of 1645 was confirmed by Gov. Lovelace in the year 1670, with the evident design of more clearly defining the town-boundaries, which had long been a matter of dispute because of the vagueness with which they were expressed in the first general patent of Gov. Kieft. After describing the town-bounds, in general terms, very similar to those used in the previous patent, it adds: "And all the meadow-ground and upland not specified in the former Patent, concerning which there has been several disputes and differences between the Inhabitants of Gravesend and their neighbor, Francis Brown, the which in parte were settled both by my predecessor and myself, but since fully concluded and determined between them by Articles of Agreement, The which Articles I do hereby confirm and Allow."

Thus was this trouble, which had so disturbed the peace of the town, quieted for the time, only to break out again with unabated fury, a century further on.

Another confirmatory patent was issued, later still, by Gov. Dongan, in 1686, by which the town-lines were made definite and permanent; while, at the same time, they were somewhat extended beyond the limits described by the preceding patent. This patent also fixes

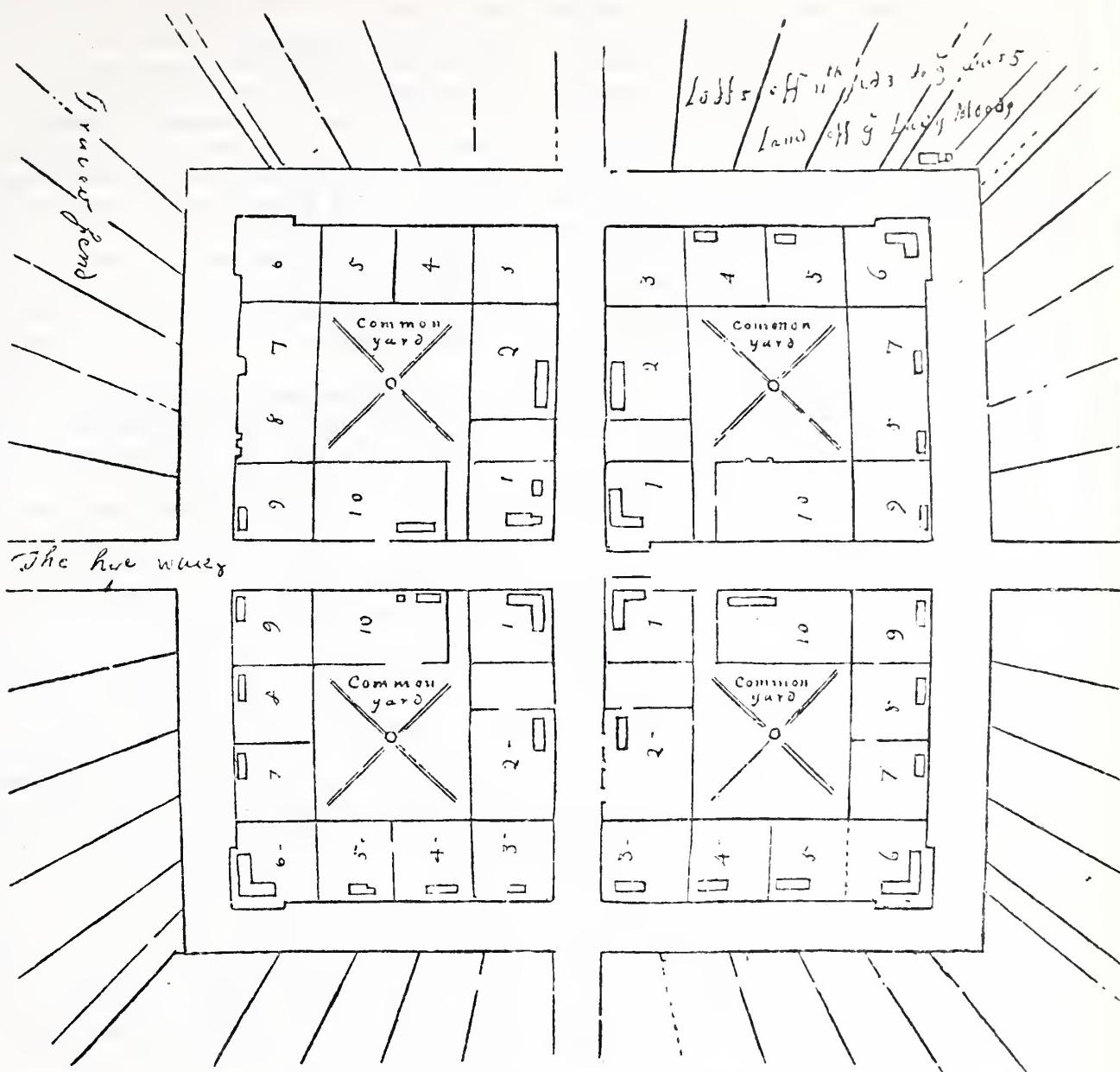
the amount of quit-rent to be paid yearly by the town, instead of the one-tenth of the product of the soil demanded by Gov. Kieft, as follows: "paying therefor yearly and every year, on the five and twentieth day of March, forever, in lieu and stead of all services, dues and demands whatsoever, as a quit-rent to his Majesty's use, six bushels of good winter merchantable wheat, unto such officer or officers as shall be appointed to receive the same at the City of New York."

These three original patents, written upon parchment, in an excellent state of preservation, are still to be found in the town clerk's office at Gravesend; and (with the other town records), unlike those of the surrounding towns, are in the English, instead of the Dutch, language.

Thus furnished with the requisite authority, Lady Moody and her associates began in earnest the work before them. In view of the natural advantages which the town possessed, they no doubt hoped to make it, at some future day, a large and important commercial center. From its situation at the mouth of "The Narrows," and with a good harbor of its own; with the ocean on the one side, and the then-flourishing village of New Amsterdam (New York) on the other, there did indeed seem to be good ground for such an expectation. But unfortunately, as the event proved, Gravesend Bay, though affording secure anchorage for smaller craft, would not permit vessels of large tonnage to enter its quiet waters with perfect safety. And so the idea of building a "city by the sea," which in extent, wealth, and business enterprise, should at least rival New Amsterdam, was reluctantly abandoned.

However, with this end in view, as the work began would seem to indicate, they commenced the laying out of the village. Selecting a favorable site near the center of the town, they measured off a square containing about sixteen acres of ground, and opened a street around it. This large square they afterwards divided into squares of four acres each, by opening two streets at right angles through the center. The whole was then enclosed by a palisade-fence, as a protection, both against the sudden attacks of hostile Indians, and the depredations of wolves and other wild animals which were then common upon the island. Upon one of the oldest maps of the town, on file in the clerk's office, we find a perfect representation of the village-plan as originally laid out. From this we learn that each of the four squares was divided into equal sections, laid off around the outside of each square and facing the outer street. These were numbered from one to ten, in each of the four squares. This gave forty sections in all; and thus one section was allotted to each of the forty patentees. By this arrangement every family could reside within the village, and share alike its palisade-defence. In the center of each square was reserved a large public yard, where the cattle of the inhabitants were brought in from the commons, and herded for the





# Ye ANCIENT PLOT OF ye TOWNE OF S'GRAVESENDE

1645

(Copied from the Original in the Town-Clerk's Office.)



night, for their better protection. At a later period, if not at this early date, a small portion of each square was devoted to *public* uses; on one was the church, on another was the school-house, on another the town-hall, and on the fourth the burying-ground. The original plan of the town is preserved, in its main features, to this day, after almost two hundred and fifty years.

The farms, or “planters’ lots,” as they were then called, were also 40 in number, and were laid out in triangular form, with the apex resting upon the village, and the boundary-lines diverging therefrom like the radii of a circle. This plan would thus enable each man to go from his house within the village-defences to his farm, with least trouble and exposure to himself, and without trespassing upon his neighbor. Several town-farms have retained to the present time this peculiarity of outline.

From the fact that the village was divided into 40 sections, and that 40 farms radiated therefrom, we have naturally inferred that there were 40 patentees. If this be so, one of them, very early in the history of the town, must have dropped out of the original number, either by death or removal; or, as tradition has it, forfeiting by his profligate life all his right, title and interest, in the property allotted him. This would seem to be more than mere conjecture; for, in all subsequent divisions of lands lying beyond the home-farms, there were 39 sections in each division, and only 39 names as including all the patentees.

By reference to the old map above mentioned, we are able to locate precisely the land allotted to Lady Moody, which has been to some, of late, a matter of doubt and inquiry. In the original allotment of land to the patentees, a majority of them were granted what were called “plantation lots,” as we have seen; but to Lady Moody a “Bowery,” or farm. On the map this “Bowery” is located north-east of the town-square, embracing the land belonging to the late Judge Barent Johnson, and possibly a part of the present Prospect Park Fair Grounds. But her land must have extended west of the village also, probably by subsequent purchase, although this is not indicated upon the map. We so judge, from the fact that Robert Pennoyer’s land, as we have already seen in considering his patent, is therein described as lying “between the land of Antony Jansen and Meladie Moody,” which could not be true except upon the above supposition. The late TUNIS G. BERGEN, in his *Early Settlers of Kings County*, thinks it probable that her land included the farm of the late Ex-Mayor Smith, of Brooklyn, together with the farms of Jacobus Lake and Cornelius D. Stryker, all west of the village. If this be true, her “Bowery” covered a large area of what is now most valuable property. But whatever property these Gravesend settlers possessed, whether much or little, they held with a clear title from its original owners.

**Indian Purchases**—Gravesend, at the time of its settlement, was, like the rest of Kings county, the property of the Canarsie Indians; and, from them, at different times, all the land within the present town-boundaries was fairly purchased. The earliest of these purchases is recorded in a deed (one of the few town-documents written in Dutch), on file in the Gravesend town-clerk’s office, dated September 10, 1645, three months before the issue of Governor Kieft’s patent. There are two other Indian deeds, dated in 1650 and 1654, being both for land on the present Coney Island (*see chapter on Coney Island*). In 1684, in view of the frequent changes of government, and preparatory to a confirmatory charter which they proposed to obtain from Governor Dongan, the people of Gravesend fortified their Indian title by the following conveyance, the original of which is still among the Gravesend records:

“Know all men whome these presents may anyways concerne, that we, Crackewasco, Arrenopeah, Mamektio, Annenges, the right and true proprietors of a certain parcel of land commonly called by the Indians *Makeopaca*, beginning at the most eastward end of the beach called by the Indians *Moeung*, bounded on the westmost side by the land heretofore purchased from Chippahig, and on the eastward side by the creek commonly called the Strome Kill, and soe along from the head of said creek, through the middle of the meadow and valley, till they come to a white-oak tree standing by the Flatland wagon path and soe running to another white oak tree standing by Utrecht wagon path, and soe upon a direct line to the Flatbush fence, and upon the west side bounded by the field of Utrecht, Doe hereby acknowledge and declare, that, for and in consideration of one blanket, one gun, one kettle, to have sold, assigned and made over all our right, title, interest and claim, to the said parcel of land, from us, our heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever unto the freeholders and inhabitants of Gravesend in Kings County, their heirs, executors, administrators and assigns forever, for them the said inhabitants to have, hold, possess and enjoy the same as their own free land of inheritance or otherwise to dispose of as to them shall seem meet without any molestation from us or any other. Witness our hands the 20th of the 5th month, called July, 1684. Cake <sup>his</sup> N wasco, Areun <sup>his</sup> X apoech. Arma <sup>his</sup> nat.

mark mark mark mark  
Mus <sup>his</sup> V kheok, witnessed by us Pense <sup>his</sup> U mend, Wope <sup>his</sup> 7 sa.  
mark mark mark mark  
Jack <sup>his</sup> V kahna, Slip <sup>his</sup> C amore, Wer <sup>his</sup> O ransobling. John  
mark mark mark  
Tilton, Senior, Samuel Spicer, Barent Jurfansen, Joachim Guylerk. Recorded by me John Emans, Clercke.

This fair and honorable dealing won for the settlers the respect and friendship of their Indian neighbors, with whom at first they maintained most pleasant and familiar relations. But familiarity bred contempt, and the savages finally began to demand, as their right, what had previously been granted as a matter of kindness or policy. Little resentments arose on both sides, and so it happened that private and personal wrongs were committed by both parties, paving the way for the open and bitter hostilities which soon followed. Undoubtedly, the ill-advised policy of Director Kieft tended, as



was openly charged against him at the time), to precipitate upon the colony the Indian war which broke out in 1643-44, and resulted in great distress and destruction of life and property.

Upon the Gravesend people, then in the first year of their settlement, and but ill prepared for such attacks, this new danger fell with great force. But they stoutly defended their village against several very sudden and fierce attacks. During these perilous times, every settler was compelled, by town ordinance, to share in building and keeping in repair the palisades, which surrounded the town-square and formed its defence. Each man was also obliged to keep, constantly on hand, one gun, and a certain quantity of powder and lead, in order to be prepared for any sudden emergency. During the year above mentioned, the Indian raids upon the town were unusually frequent and severe, and the inhabitants were kept in constant fear. The house of Lady Moody, according to Gov. Winthrop, seems to have been the principal point of attack; perhaps, because it was the largest and most conspicuous, and better fitted than the rest for a common rallying-point.

On one occasion her house was bravely defended by forty men (probably the whole number of able-bodied men in the settlement), some of whom had the reputation of being expert Indian-fighters. At another time the inhabitants, greatly outnumbered by the Indians, were compelled to flee to Amersfort (Flatlands), where they remained till the danger was passed. It is probable that, at this time, the town had not been put in a proper condition of defence, for want of time to build their palisade-fortifications. During this year, however, a treaty of peace was made with Pennowits, the crafty chief of the Canarsies (See THOMPSON'S *Hist. Long Island*), ending, for a time at least, all open hostilities between the settlers and the Indians upon Long Island.

It is probable that the dangers and anxieties of this first year led Lady Moody to think seriously of returning to Massachusetts; for there is extant a letter from Deputy-Gov. John Endicott to Gov. Winthrop, dated "Salem, 22 of the 2d month, 1644," referring to a request which she had made for permission to return, and strongly urging the Governor to refuse her unless she would confess her previous error, and leave her opinions behind her.

After this time we hear of but little disturbance from the Indians till the year 1655, when occurred probably the fiercest attack from the Northern Indians which the town had yet sustained. Dr. STRONG'S *History of Flatbush* says:

"In 1655, a large body of Indians from the north, following the course of the Hudson river to the south, left death and desolation in their track along the Jersey shore, then crossed over to Staten Island, and here killed sixty-seven white settlers, beside destroying much property: they then crossed

the Narrows, and made a fierce attack upon Gravesend. The inhabitants were unable to drive away the invading foe, but bravely stood their ground until relieved by a detachment of soldiers sent from Fort Amsterdam."

So far as we know, this was the end of all the Indian troubles in which the people of Gravesend were concerned.

**Division of Lands.**—As we have already seen, an allotment of land was made to each of the patentees, and those who were associated with them. In each grant of land made, we find in the early records an entry like the following: "To Thomas Cornish was granted a planter's lott with all the privileges thereunto appertaining." These were undoubtedly the lots radiating from the village-center, to which reference has already been made. We have no data for determining the precise area of a "planter's lott;" but, from the condition of things at this early period, we infer that it contained only a few acres at most. It happened in some cases, however, that a larger tract of land, or "bouwery," came into the possession of certain individuals by special grant, as in the case of Lady Moody, for what reason we are not told.

The grant for a Bowery contained 30 acres of upland, with more or less meadow, according to their need of pasture. The following town-record is in point: Sept. 27, 1646. "It was agreed by the town that for such as should have Boweries, should have fifteen morgen of upland with meadow proportionable to their stocks." This meadow-land was also made inseparable from the farm, for, at the same meeting, "It was then agreed upon that none of the said inhabitants should dispose or sell away his meadow from his lott, but that it should remain entire to it."

Whatever the number of acres originally allotted to each settler, their possessions did not remain the same for any length of time. Farms and town-lots rapidly exchanged hands. The town-records, for the first fifty years, are largely taken up with the transfer of real-estate, either by purchase or exchange. After a few years, as we can readily see, the amount of land which each one individually possessed was large or small, as his enterprise or necessities led him to buy or sell. In every subsequent sale of land, however, the town reserved the first right to purchase; "but if the town would not buye it, then said inhabitant had leave to sell to any one unless he was notoriously detected for a scandalous person, or a publicke disturber of the common peace."

In order to secure permanent and useful citizens, rather than mere adventurous speculators, at a town-meeting held Sept. 7, 1646,

"It was then and there ordered and agreed upon by ye major parte of ye said Inhabitants that in case they did not build a habitable house by the last of Maye next, which will be in ye year 1647—that the said Inhabitant that should be defaultful therein shal be fined twenty shillings."

In 1647 the majority of the property that individual



portion lying between the village and Coney Island, was divided and assigned, so that every man might know his own; and Sergeant Hubbard was appointed to do the work at the expense of the town.

In the year 1657 another division of land was agreed upon. One thousand acres, supposed to be that lying adjacent to the town-lots, were divided, according to the record, among thirty-eight families. The north-quarter, as it was called, was divided into 12-acre lots, and the west-quarter into 20-acre lots. The eastern part of the town, then and since known as the "Neck," was at this time called also "the general corn-field." This seems to have been, as its name indicates, the common property of the town, where, under certain restrictions, each inhabitant was at liberty to choose and cultivate such a number of acres as he could properly manage. Ten or twelve years later this land was also divided, and either sold or given to the inhabitants. The land on the south side of the present highway leading to "Gerretsen's Mill" was divided into thirty-nine 12-acre lots, and some of them remain to-day as they were originally laid out. The land on the north side of the highway was divided into the same number of lots, but containing probably a larger number of acres. This division was made in 1668-9, as seen from an old map, dated 1674.

The north part of the town, then thickly wooded, as were other portions of it at the time of its settlement, was called the "North Woods." This was also divided in 1684, and distribution made to the inhabitants.

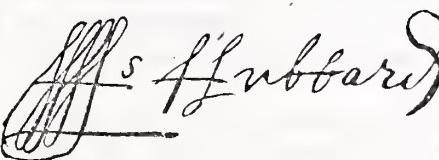
Within forty years of its settlement, therefore, the most valuable part of the town was thus disposed of.

**Town Organization.**—In 1646 the inhabitants availed themselves of the privilege granted by their patent "to erect a body politique and civil combination," and to "elect, nominate and choose three of the ablest, approved honest men," who should act as justices in the town-court, when confirmed by the Governor-General. The three men first elected and so confirmed were Lieut. George Baxter, Edward Brown



Facsimile of George Baxter's Signature.

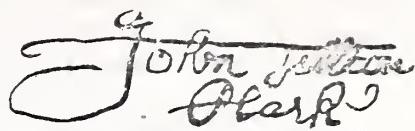
and William Wilkins. Sergeant James Hubbard was



Facsimile of James Hubbard's Signature.

chosen *schoot or constable*, and John Tilton, "town-

*clark*," with a salary of one gilder (40 ets.) from every inhabitant of the town.



Facsimile of John Tilton's Signature.

Jan. 9, 1651, a town-order was made regulating the manner in which the *magistrates* should be chosen, thus: the town was to choose the first man, and he was to choose the second; these two a third, and so on until six had been chosen. The first three chosen were to act as magistrates for one year; the second three assisting in court when necessity required. The next year, the second three were to act officially and the first three to assist; and so they were to alternate. All were to be approved by the town, and confirmed by the Governor.

The Board were empowered to fill all vacancies occasioned by the death or inability of any of its number.

Town-meetings were, at first, held monthly, at some private house, as evidenced by the following town-order, "May 3d, 1652, voted to hold regular town-meetings the last Saturday of every month at ye house of James Hubbard at 12 o'clock, M., and ye drum to beat one hour before ye time." Also, it was voted to choose at every meeting a person who should act as "speaker for their more orderly proceedings, peace and credit." Fines were imposed upon those who were absent from these meetings, without sufficient excuse. After the purchase of a school-house in 1728, it was probably used for this purpose.

The first record of a town-meeting is dated in the year 1646. From that time the records are regularly and carefully kept. Public meetings, in case of emergency, were assembled by the beating of the drum, and general gatherings for town-work by the blowing of a horn.

In those days it was deemed to be not only the privilege, but the *duty* of every man to be present at these public gatherings, and have a voice in the management of town-affairs. Hence, in 1656, a man was chosen to warn the inhabitants of all general and private meetings of the town; and those failing to appear, without good excuse for their absence, were liable to a fine of 5 gilders for each offense. At the same meeting it was agreed that six men present at any meeting should form a quorum for the transaction of all town-business.

In 1646 the town "allotted to each man ye just proportion of fence every man was to maintain for his peculiar lott, which is 20 poles."

Peremptory measures were sometimes necessary to prevent the careless from neglecting this part of their public duty. So, in the following spring, when one



Applegate failed to put up his fence according to law, the town voted "to hyer a man to doo it and paye him, and Applegate to answer to ye town."

In 1652 three men were chosen as "*fence-rievers*," who were to go their rounds once every fortnight, and compel all owners of land to keep their fences in order, under a penalty of 5 gilders. In 1674 the penalty was fixed at 20 gilders.

In 1646 a public pound was made, and 2 stivers (4 cts.) were allowed for pounding cattle or swine.

In 1649 it was ordered, by town-vote, "yt every man shall provide himself of a ladder of 20 foot or above by New Yeare's day nexte," under penalty of two gilders and 10 stivers per week while in default. It was also ordered, at the same meeting, that each man should provide himself with arms within two months, and also one pound of powder and two pounds of lead "to lye in Baneke."

The following vote was also passed: that "ye pasture att ye end of ye lotts shall be for ye use of any of ye inhabitants for a calf or cow yt is sick, or for a horse in case a stranger comes to ye town." In the last clause of this enactment we find the evidence of that warm-hearted Duteh hospitality, for which their descendants are still noted.

The fines collected for violation of law were at first put into the "common or poor stock" of the town; but in 1652 it was voted that the fines should be used in defraying the common charges, or town-expenses.

A *Bureau of Vital Statistics* was established in 1650. The record is as follows: "It was also agreed unto that all burials and marriages and for all yt shall be borne, notice should be taken thereof and recorded."

For the first half century of the town's existence marriages were performed by a magistrate; but those intending marriage, whether by a Justice or minister, were obliged to have the banns published from the nearest church, as prescribed by law. A marriage is recorded with the following endorsement, dated 1689:

"A certificate of ye minister at Flatbush. Isaac Hasselberg and Elizabeth Baylis have had their proclamation in our church as commonly our manner and custom is, and no opposition or hindrance come against them, so as that they may be confirmed in ye banns of matrimony, whereto we wish them blessing.

MITTWOUT, ye 17 March 1689.  
RUDOLPH VARRICK, Minister."

In accordance with the above permission, they were married in Gravesend by Justice Nicholas Stillwell.

In 1664, Dee. 31, Sergeant James Hubbard was married, by a magistrate, to Elizabeth Baylis. This was his second marriage. At the same time, as justice, he united in marriage James Bowne and Mary Stout.

The following are the first entries under the new law. "Ang. ye 2d. Peter Simson was by publick authority married." "Aug. ye 11. The sonn of William Wilkins was borne, and Aug. 18, he was buried."

"Sept. 9. Thomas Cornwell deceased and was buried." His widow seems to have been speedily consoled, however, for the very next record, and bearing the same date as the above, is as follows. "Sept. 9, 1650. John Morris and Elizabeth Cornwell, widow of Thomas, were married."

**Cattle and Fences.**—All horses and colts turned into the common pasture at Coney Island were, by law, marked, and a description of them kept on the town-records.

In 1675 three men were chosen, by the town, to go to the "flys" (marshes) about the 2d hour, and see if any beasts were mired, and if so, help them out. If any beast should die through their neglect, they were to pay the damage; and if any man should be warned to go and help these men and should refuse, he was to be fined 5 shillings and pay all damage resulting from his neglect.

**Early Temperance Laws.**—The liquor traffic occupied the attention of the people considerably at a very early date. A license law was passed regulating its sale to the white population, and a stringent prohibitory law preventing its sale to the Indians. The latter is as follows:

"April 16, 1656. Att an assemblie of ye Inhabitants upon a lawful warning given, it was inacted, ordered and agreed upon that hee, she or they whatsoeuer, that should tapp, draw out, sell or lett any Indian or Indians in this corporation have any brandie, wine, strong liquor or strong drink, should, if so foctd, paye the summ of fifty gilders, and for the next default one hundred gilders, according to the law of the country."

The law also provided that not more than one pint should be sold, at one time, to the whites.

Before the Town Court, Oct. 8, 1663, "Richard Stont declareth that Nathaniel Brittain hath slandered him that he hath sould wine to the Indians. The said Nathaniel denyeth it, but said that the Indians told his wife that they had bought wine of Stout." The Court, however, ordered Nathaniel to pay the cost of prosecution.

Prosecutions were not uncommon under these laws, not only before the Town Court, but also before the Court of Sessions. Ambrose London was before the Town Court, charged with selling more than a pint of wine at once. The defence was the same weak plea that men so often make now to satisfy their conscience and justify their violation of law, viz.: that people would have it, and if he did not furnish it some one else would; but the Court fined him to the full extent of the law. Being afterward tried and found guilty of selling liquor by false measure, he was again heavily fined.

**Sunday Laws.**—On the 7th of Oct., 1666, "Thomas Whitlock and John Griggs were presented before the Town Court for buying and selling land on the first day of the week. John Griggs said he did not remember such a covenant. The Court, however, ordered that



the bargain be declared void, and each be fined 15 shillings and cost of Court."

The records furnish another law equally decisive upon this point.

"Whereas there is a prohibition express by an order from the Governor of all such exercises upon ye first day of ye week as gunning, ball-playing, horse-racing, nine-pins, excessive drinking and ryotting with other ye like which greatly tends to ye dishonor of God, ye hindrance of many from and in religious duties to ye reproach of ye Government and ye shame of ye place, for ye preventing whereof the officers of this town according to their dutye have given due notice that what person soever shall in the like transgress, shall pay 10 shillings and answer it before the Governor.

This act proclaimed the 13 of 8 month 1675."

**Sundry Orders and Contracts.**—The town at this early period seems to have suffered much from the depredations of wolves. This part of the island, being in some portions thickly wooded, furnished, for a time, a secure lair for these wild beasts, from which they could make their nightly raids upon the unprotected flock and fowls of the settlers.

To encourage their extermination, therefore, the town, in 1657, ordered a bounty of 5 gilders to be given for every wolf killed within the town corporation. This extra inducement, added to the self-interest of each individual, led to such a determined effort against the common enemy as greatly held them in check, and in due time caused their entire disappearance.

The woods, to which we have referred as covering a large area of the town, were at first common property, and at the disposal of any one who might be at the pains to cut fire-wood or timber therefrom. And to protect every man in this right, a town-order was made about this time, laying a fine of 20 gilders upon any one who should take for himself the wood or timber which another had cut. There must have been some dishonest men, even in those days, to make such a law necessary.

**Houses of the Olden Time.**—It may be interesting to know the style of house which afforded shelter and protection to the early settlers. If the following is a fair specimen, it will not strike us as being too elaborate or expensive, even for that early day. Here is the contract for a dwelling, as entered by the town-clerk upon his record :

"Ambrose London bargained and agreed with Michah Jure for his building him a house by the middle of June nexte, and to paye the said Michah 40 gilders for it—at the time he begins a skipole of Indian corne, at the raising of it 10 guilders, and at ye finishing of it ye rest of the said summe. Ye house to be made 22 foote long, 12 foote wide, 8 foote stooede with a petition in ye middle, and a chimney, to laye booth rooms with joice, to cover ye roof, and make up both gable ends with clabboards, as also to make two windows and a door."

This man, London, was rather a speculator, and soon disposed of this house, and made another contract for

a larger and still more commodious one; the contract price for building it being \$44.00. John Hawes was the builder, and his contract was to build "1 house framed upon sills of 26 foote long, and 16 foote broad and 10 foote stooede, with 2 chimneys in ye middle and 2 doors and two windows, and to clabboard only ye roof and dobe the rest parte." The price was 110 gilders, or instead, "one Dutch cow."

**Household Furniture, etc.**—But, if their houses were built more with reference to their comfort and actual necessities than for display, the same was true of their household furniture and personal effects, as will be seen from the following inventory of the estate of John Buckman, deceased, dated in the year 1651, and signed by Lady Moody as one of the witnesses. Among a few other articles appear the following : "1 Kettle, 1 Frying pan, 1 Traye, 1 Jarre, 1 pair breeches, 1 Bonett, 1 Jackett, 1 Paile, 2 Shirts, 1 Tubbe; 1 Pair shoes, 2 pair ould stockings, 9 ould goats, money in chest, 32 gilders."

**The Town Court.**—This court (see p. 164) was established in 1646, by the election of three men, acting as justees, to hear and settle all complaints brought before them. It took cognizance of cases of slander, trespass, theft and debt; and in all cases coming within their jurisdiction, where the damage did not exceed 50 Holland gilders (\$20), the decision of any two of the magistrates was final. But, in all cases where the damage was in excess of \$20, an appeal could be taken from this to a higher court. At first the time and patience of the court was severely taxed, in being compelled to listen to complaints of the most trivial character, which obliged them to hold frequent and otherwise unnecessary sessions. To remedy this, and, so far as possible, relieve the court, in 1659, at a general town meeting, "Itt was then and there agreed unto that a general Court should be held once or twice a year, and that ye town should make choice of two or three men to sitt with ye Court att these times and to adjudicate with them about such matters as maye concerne ye good of ye general and every one in particular, and yt ye present pattent be read att these times to ye whole Inhabitants." It was also ordered, by public vote, that those found guilty of "slander, laying violent hands upon any to the breach of the peace, theft," &c., should be punished, "Either by fining, imprisoning, stocking or standing in a publick place." The latter became the common mode of punishment for these offences. There are those still living among us who remember well the old stocks, which were placed near the town-hall, where prisoners convicted of petty crimes were made a public show, and were hooted at and pelted by the boys of the neighborhood.

As already observed, the records of the town for the first fifty years were largely taken up with the transfer of real-estate; which may find explanation in the fact



that breach of contract was, during all this time, a common cause of complaint before the Court, and great trouble and annoyance was caused in settling these difficulties for the want of a written agreement; so that, in 1651, the court ordered "that for the future, all bargains and sales should be recorded by the town-clerk, or be in writing with sufficient witnesses, or the Court would give them no hearing."

Cases of theft were not entirely unknown, even in those days of primitive simplicity and honesty. We quote the following as a fair specimen of many of the grave complaints which taxed the wisdom and patience of the court.

Thomas Cornwell was plaintiff, and Ambrose London defendant, in an "action for taking awaye his henn and selling it. Order of ye Court was that ye said Ambrose Should restore again ye henn, which he promised to doe." But failing to comply with the order, in Jan., 1649, the court again ordered "that he should forthwith paye to the said Cornwell 3 gilders and 8 stivers with the Cost of Court."

The most common offence with which the court was called upon to deal was *slander*. So troubled was the court with cases of this character, which were brought without any just cause, or upon insufficient evidence, or, as the court expressed it, "caused by certaine busey bodyes, persons insendiaries of mischief and trouble," that at length a fine of 50 gilders was ordered against any man who should bring such action without the necessary proof. Sometimes the punishment was made severe in aggravated cases, if the charge was proved. Again, satisfaction was rendered by the accused making a suitable acknowledgment of his wrong-doing, and apologizing therefor, with promise of future amendment. It would be unjust to suppose that the offenders formed any large portion of the little colony. The great majority were honest, thrifty, law-abiding citizens. We thus judge, because only a few names appear, and these repeatedly, as defendants in these actions. The severity of the punishment sometimes imposed may also be taken as a fair interpretation of the contempt with which the better portion of the community looked down upon these disturbances of the common weal. Judgment, too, was pronounced without respect of person; and female gossips received no better treatment at the hands of the law than their male companions. The following are fair specimens of the many that fill the court record. In 1650 Nicholas Stillwell brought an action for slander against Thomas Applegate, for saying, "he thought if plaintiff's debts were paid he would have little left." As he had nothing to say to the charge, the court admonished him, and fined him 12 gilders and the cost of court.

The next year Sergeant Hubbard, in behalf of his wife, brings a similar charge against the same Applegate. Here it is:

"Defendant is charged with saying ye plaintif had

but half a wife. Being questioned by the court if he could disprove the fact, said, he never said it. Nevertheless, the Court sentenced him to make publick acknowledgment of his error, and to stand at the publick poste during the pleasure of the Court, with a paper on his breast mentioning the reason: that he is a notorious scandalous person; wherenpon, he again confessed his guilt, and desired her to pass it by, and remit it, which she freely did, and he gave her thanks."

In the case of Ann Goulder, evidently an old offender, found guilty of slander, she was ordered "to stand in ye yrons half an hour, with a paper on her breast declaring her to be a publick disturber of ye peace, and if any further trouble from her, she to be put out of ye town."

Ambrose London brought suit against the wife of Thomas Applegate, for saying "his wife did milk her cows. The Deft saith she said no otherwise, but as Penelope Prince tould her, yt Ambrose, his wife, did milk her cows. Penelope Prince being questioned, acknowledged her fault in soe speaking, and being sorry for her words, she spoke satisfaction on both sides."

That it was a serious thing in those days to speak evil of those in authority, is evident from the following case:

Thomas Applegate, Sr., it appears, had brought a case before the Governor for adjudication. As the decision had been against him, he felt himself greatly wronged; and had, in his anger, said that undue influence had been brought to bear upon his Excellency to effect this result. Consequently, at a court held Dec. 26th, 1650, he was charged with saying that the Governor "took bribes." Although he positively denied the charge, "yett nevertheless the Court being sufficiently satisfied in their consciences according to the evidence yt ye said Applegate had spoken ye said words, the which being soe contrarie to all rules and laws divine and human, not to scandalize or to speak evil of any person much more of ruler and Gov. ye Court do therefore adjudge ye said Applegate doe deserve to have his tongue bored through with a red hott yre, and to make publick acknowledgement of his great transgression therein, and never to have credit in anye of belief in any testimonie or relation he shall make either in court or countrie, and for ye execution of ye said sentence doe refer him to ye mercy of ye Governor."

When this sentence was publicly read, the said Applegate confessed his guilt, and asked forgiveness of the Governor, and begged the court to intercede for him; at the same time expressing the hope that this would be a warning to him in the future. We have every reason to believe that through the repentance of the offender, and the kindly intercession of the court, the tongue of the slanderer escaped the judicial perforation, and that the remainder of the sentence was also remitted.

The above examples from Town-Court records will



suffice to show with what judicial wisdom and severity the minor offences against law and order were treated over two hundred years ago, in protecting the rights of our citizens and maintaining the public peace.

This brings us to the

**Court of Sessions**—This court, in the year 1668, was moved from Flatbush to Gravesend, where it remained for seventeen years. The original court-house is said to have been built in 1668, and stood near the present Dutch church.

We find this interesting record of the court while held at Gravesend :

“Whereas there hath been several misdemeanors committed in contempt of authority in the town of Gravesend, by throwing down the stocks, pulling down fences, and such like crimes ; the court also find there was no watch in town which might have prevented it, and being the offenders cannot be discovered, it is ordered that the town stand fined in 5 pounds till they have made discovery of the offenders.”

A watch-house had been built about ten years before this, but the authorities had evidently become careless about keeping suitable guard at night. It would be an excellent thing if our local authorities, now-a-days, could be made, in like manner, responsible for good government.

Then, in 1685, by act of the Second Colonial Assembly, it was removed to Flatbush again; the latter place being considered the more central and convenient location for the transaction of county business. It remained here until its final removal to Brooklyn, where it is now held. The old record of the Court of Sessions, while it was held at Gravesend, may now be found in a fair state of preservation in the Register’s office in the city of Brooklyn. The first entry in the book is as follows :

“At a Court of Sessions held att Gravesend the 17 day of March, By his Royal Highness’ authority, in the 25 year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord Charles the Second, by the grace of God, of Great Brittain, France and Ireland King-defender of the faith, &c., and in the year of our Lord God 1668-9.”

“Present,

CORNELIUS VAN RUYDER, JAMES HUBBARD, RICHARD LOTT,	} Justices.
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The record of every regular session of the court is begun in the same language as the above, changing only the date of its sitting, or the names of the presiding justices.

It was customary in this court for the Secretary of the Colony, or a member of the Council, or the High Sheriff, if present, to sit with the justices and preside over their deliberations.

The following case, tried here before a jury, shows that they were unwilling to have justice miscarry through any technical defect in the indictment, or to have any artful schemer profit by another’s ignorance of the law :

“Samuel Dennis, Pltf. John Van Cleef, Def’t.—The Plaintiff produced the Def’ts obligacion wherein hee was to

pay him severall parcels of corne in Nov. last. The Def’t. owned it was his act and deed, but objected that the action was not legally entered, nor a declaration given in. Whereupon, it being left to the jury they brought in their verdict: as followeth. That seeing the pltf is a stranger, and un-acquainted with the laws so as to observe every circumstance which is proper for ourselves, but hath observed the end and substance of the law, though not every circumstance, that therefore hee have a present determination or hearing, seeing the law in folio the fourth, doth not make a negative exception in this case.”

“The Worshipl Court allow the verdict, and order present payment of the debt, with two pounds damage and costs of Court.”

The following case shows a hospitable regard, on the part of the court, for the comfort and welfare of strangers :

“The Constable of Bushwick presented Humphry Clay for Retayling of Liquor without a license, but the Court being Informed that hee keeps an inn att Marspath Hills for the accommodation of Strangers they have thought best to grant him a license and remit the fine.”

We will mention but one other case, worthy of note because of the peculiar punishment inflicted. We have been able to find no evidence of this case in the records of the court, but find it stated in THOMPSON’S *History of Long Island*. From the date given we think there must be some mistake as to the locality, but we give it as we find it. A soldier was convicted before the Court of Sessions in Gravesend for leaving his post while on guard, for the evident purpose of indulging his appetite for strong drink. He was condemned to sit upon a wooden horse during parade, with a pitcher in one hand and a sword in the other, to signify that he loved his beer more than his duty, and that his courage was determined by the quantity consumed.

**Quit-Rent**—The patent of Gov. Kieft exacted from the settlers one-tenth of the revenue of the soil, as quit-rent, to be paid yearly to His Majesty. By the Dongen Patent of 1686 this yearly tax was commuted to six bushels of good merchantable winter-wheat, to be paid every 25th of March to some officer of the government duly appointed to receive it. This certainly was not an exorbitant demand for the favors the town had received; nor have we heard that complaint was ever made.

There are, among the old papers of the town, several receipts (the earliest dated 1776) for this quit-rent, given by the Receiver-General, or by his deputy, which show that the town continued to pay the six bushels of wheat as late, at least, as 1780.

After the Revolutionary war, and in the year 1786, the legislature passed an act providing that any individuals or corporations in arrears for quit-rents, who should pay such arrearages, less eight years (the period of the war), and a sum equal to fourteen years additional quit-rent, should receive a certificate from the treasurer of the State and be thenceforth forever exempted from the payment of any quit-rents. They



Gravesend met its obligations fully is shown by the following :

" Patent granted to the inhabitants of Gravesend in Kings County date 10 Sept 1686. Quit rent six Bush Wheat pr ann

Paid up to 25 Mar 1775						
From 25 March	1775					
To 25 Dec	1786					
	—					
11.9						
8						
—						
3.9	6	22½	6/-	£6.15		
14 yrs Comut.	6	84	6/-	25. 4		
	—					
				£31.19		

Rec'd 12 Dec. 1786 From Olibert Terhune Supervisor of Gravesend Public Securities Which with the Interest Allowed Thereon amount to Thirty one Pounds Nineteen Shillings In Full for the Arrears of Quit Rent and a Commutation of the future Quit Rents that would have arisen on the Above Described Patent.

GERARD BANCER, Treas'r.

**Assessors and County Treasurer.** Assessors are first mentioned in 1691. The next year a *County Treasurer* was chosen to look after the money thus collected. He seems to have been chosen by representatives from the various towns, as is inferred from the following :

"At a general town meeting held Jan 22, 1692, John Poland and John Lake were chosen to meet other townsmen at Flatbush to choose a County Treasurer, next monday being ye 25 of January. Also William Goulding and Daniel Lake to present our assessment to ye justices at Flatbush ye first of Feb. next ensuing, because ye assessors were absent."

**A Port of Entry.**—In 1693 Gravesend was one of the three ports of entry on Long Island.

**Census.**—The first attempt at a census of the town, which we have been able to find, was made in 1675 (*Documentary History*, Vol. II), as follows :

"The Accountts from Gravesend this 14 of the 7th mo'th Anno 1675, of all personns Rateable according to ye law, as also of their Lands both upland and meadow ground, with the number of their cattle, namely—Oxen : Cows : horses ; Mares ; and Sheep as follows : Of persons the troopers excepted 30 : of oxen there is 26 : of cows there is to ye number of 107 : of cattle 107 : of horses and mares 62 : of colts 29 : of sheep to ye number of 60 : of acres of upland and Meadow ground 932.

By me Nicholas Stillwell, Constable, and ye Overseers. Rate £13 14s 5d. (Endorsed.)

Gravesend valuacons Brought in Sept. 20, 1675.

Exd. Rate £13 14s 3d."

1675. "Feb. 1st. At a general town meeting ye Inhabitants made choice of Nicholas Stillwell to be Constable ye present year. 13 voters." This could hardly have been the full number of voters in town, even at this early day.

1683. In a return of the persons, lands and cattle ratable according to law in Gravesend, we find there are 32 persons taxed ; number of acres, 1,356 ; horses, 59 ; colts, 9 ; cows, 121 ; calves between 1 and 3 years,

119 ; and 2 hogs kept by John Tilton, Sr.; 14 sheep. This shows a gain in some respects, and a falling off in others.

1698. In a list of the freeholders, their wives, children, apprentices and slaves, within Kings county, we find Gravesend credited with 31 men, 32 women, 124 children, 6 apprentices, and 17 slaves, making a total population of 210. At this time Brooklyn had a population of only 511, and all Kings county contained but 2,013 inhabitants.

1738. In another list of the inhabitants of Kings county, both white and black, the census of Gravesend is given as follows : "Total population, 268 ; white men, women and children, 218 ; blacks, 50." Thus showing an increase in total population, in forty years, of only 58 persons, and of these 38 were blacks. Brooklyn had, according to this census, a total population of 711, and Kings county 2,348, as follows : Whites, 1,784 ; blacks, 564.

1788. In an old tax-list of this date, found among the town-papers, we find the number of inhabitants taxed in Gravesend to be 58. Only 47 of the above were real-estate owners, the others being taxed for personal property. Number of acres, 2,211 ; number of horses, 95 ; cattle, 227 ; sheep, 42 ; slaves, 65.

1789. In a paper, similar to the above, there were but 42 real-estate owners on the list, and the number of acres given as 3,079. This paper is signed by Cornelius Stryker, John Emmans and Stephen Emmans, Assessors.

The following returns, sent to the Secretary's office in 1790, are valuable for the sake of comparison.

NAMES OF TOWNS.	Freeholders £100. worth twp.	Freeholders worth twp.	Tenants 40a. worth twp.	Males... ... ... ...	Females... ... ... ...	Slaves... ... ... ...
Brooklyn.....	97	105	98	582	537	437
Flatbush.....	87	40	4	137	148	141
Flatlands.....	34	87	15	313	294	390
Gravesend.....	42	46	4	160	134	131
Bushwick.....	52	52	20	194	169	164
New Utrecht.....	43	46	8	170	159	204
	355	376	149	1556	1396	1471

1791. We also have before us an old paper entitled : "The second payment of the tax for building Kings county Court House, apportioned to the Inhabitants of, or Ratable estates in the Town of Gravesend, 26 day of September, 1791." In this list we have 51 ratable estates, with their valuation, and the tax laid upon them. The highest valuation is put upon the estate of Richard Stillwell, Jr., it being £1,451, and his tax £4 6s 11½d. The smallest valuation was £1, and the tax 1d.

1800. The census for Kings county gives a total population of 5,749.



1810. The census by towns was as follows : Brooklyn, 4,402 ; Bushwick, 798 ; Flatbush, 517 ; Flatlands, 517 ; Gravesend, 520 ; New Utrecht, 907 ; total, 8,303. The gain in the county in ten years, from 1800 to 1810, was 2,563. The gain for Gravesend for the same time was only 3. It is probable that these returns cannot be relied upon as perfectly accurate in every particular, but they furnish a fair approximation.

In 1828 Brooklyn had a population of 7,475. In 1840, 36,233.

1835. The census gives the number of inhabitants of Gravesend as 695 ; or only 427 for nearly a century's increase of population ; not a very remarkable growth for 97 years. In 1864 there were 99 voters.

1880. The census shows a much more rapid increase, the number of inhabitants being given as over 3,500.

1883. The tax-list gives the names of 1,307 resident tax-payers, beside a very large number of non-residents who pay taxes on parcels of land ranging in size from city building-lots to several acres. The great increase in population has been made in the last decade. The benefits to be derived from living in a place where taxes are low, the climate most healthful, and the surroundings altogether delightful, are beginning now to be appreciated as never before. We may justly look for a still larger increase in the next ten years.

**Highways.**—The first highways were narrow, unfenced lanes, rightly designated upon the old records as "wagon-paths." As the cattle of the inhabitants gradually increased, it became necessary for every man to fence his land adjoining the lanes, according to a town-order; and where the wagon-paths passed through the various lots of the farmers, as they very frequently did, the bars were to be carefully put up after every ingress and egress, under penalty of a fine for every neglect, and the damages which might result from stray cattle.

Four gates were also put up in the four quarters of the town, at the ends of the lanes, separating the common pasture-ground from the cultivated fields. If the children, even, left these gates open, the parents were held responsible for the consequences.

The streets through the town-square were the first opened, and were considered, in these early times, remarkably fine roads. Those leading to the "12 morgen" and Unionville on the southwest, and to the "Neck" or "General Cornfield" on the east, were scarcely more than simple wagon-tracks. But little labor was required in making these roads, beside that of cutting the trees or clearing the underbrush, which covered this part of the island.

The first town-record we find, relating to highways, is dated April 21, 1651, viz.:

"At an assembly of ye inhabitants of ye town it was ordered and agreed unto that every inhabitant who is possessed of a lott shall be ready to go by ye blowing of ye horn on

Thursday next to clear ye common ways uppon ye penuallie of 2 gilders for every one yt is defective."

There is another record of a highway laid out "to and from the Beach," dated Dec. 11, 1660, evidently the present road to Unionville, scarcely twenty feet wide, and known to this day as the "Beach Lane."

Highways were frequently changed for the accommodation of individuals; in those days, a matter of no great labor. We find several records like the following:

"March 25, 1678. It was proposed in a legal meeting, and in presence of Judge Nicholas Stillwell, unto ye inhabitants and freeholders of our town, by Abraham Emans, whether ye said Abraham might take unto his lott ye general highway going down to ye mill, and he ye said Abraham allowing to ye town a sufficient highway at ye east side of his lott and more convenient to ye town, which was consented unto by ye pluraltie of ye freeholders."

In the following instance the town propose the exchange: April 1st, 1697. The town propose to exchange with Nicholas Stillwell their highway "next to his habitation at the end of our lane, he allowing unto the town a sufficient highway in the same place where formerly it was."

As the early highways were opened for the purpose of reaching more easily their outlying farm-lots, rather than for the convenience of travel, it would sometimes happen that farmers from the neighboring towns, to save themselves time and lessen the distance to the point aimed at, would open short-cuts across their neighbors' fields without leave or license, to the great damage of property. This was done several times by the farmers of Flatlands and Flatbush, until the people of Gravesend, at a general town-meeting called for the purpose, drew up and presented to the above towns a strong remonstrance against such unauthorized trespass; and finally, in 1691, appealed to the Court of Sessions to confirm a town-order making such an offence a misdemeanor and finable.

The records furnish a description, dated 1698, of the highway between Flatlands and New Utrecht, which would now be utterly unknown but for this record. It seems to have followed the line of the towns, rather than a direct course, making a travel of five miles necessary to accomplish an air-line distance of three. The direction and width are as follows:

"Ye way from ye end of ye lane to Amersfort is 4 rods in breadth, and from thence along Flatbush and New Utrecht fence one rod, and at New Utrecht lane it takes the breadth of that lane, and so runs till it comes to our lane, and then it is three rods breadth, and further between every range of lots is a way one rod and a half. The line of ye highway to Amersfort is north x east, about half a point north."

At a very early date, also, probably not long after the above, another road was opened, running east and west, through the northern part of the town, from Flatlands to New Utrecht, which has been known, for a century at least, as the "King's Highway," and, like all



roads of that period, is narrow and winds about in a most arbitrary manner.

*Rideravenue*, in the northern part of the town, running from Gravesend avenue to the Coney Island avenue, was opened about 1850 or '51; and *Rider's lane*, in the extreme eastern part, extending from the "Neck" road to King's highway, was opened about 1831. They are both narrow streets.

**Coney Island Causeway.**—Previous to 1823, in order to reach Coney Island, it was necessary to ford the Coney Island creek, which could be done only when the tide was out. To meet the need of a good highway to the shore, a company was formed by act of the legislature, passed March 22, 1823, whose corporate title was "The Coney Island Bridge and Road Company." Their capital stock was \$6,000, all paid: 300 shares at \$20 per share. Van Brunt Magaw, George Stillwell, Garret Stryker, Jacobus Lakes and Lawrence Ryder were appointed a commission "to lay out a causeway from Gravesend village to the sea-shore." This was a continuation, toward the south, of the street originally laid out through the village-center. The company, by 1824, had their causeway constructed over the meadow, their bridge built, their toll-gate erected, and everything in running order. Van Brunt Magaw was elected first president, and John Terhune secretary and treasurer, and held their respective offices for sixteen years; when, September 4, 1839, James W. Cropsey was elected president, and B. I. Ryder secretary and treasurer. The road subsequently came into the hands of Mr. John Lefferts, of Flatbush, by the purchase of the stock; he kept the road in repair and collected the toll, until about the year 1876, when it was purchased by Andrew R. Culver, president of the Prospect Park and Coney Island railroad. The road is still in good condition, although sometimes covered by the high tides. It has virtually ceased to be a toll-road.

**Gravesend Avenue.**—In 1838 an effort was made to open a free road, four rods wide, "from the Coney Island Bridge road, in the town of Gravesend, over the town of Flatbush to the Clove in Flatbush hill, at the Patent-line between the towns of Flatbush and Brooklyn." This was an extension to the north of the village-center road, as the Coney Island causeway was an extension towards the south, and met with considerable opposition.

It was four rods wide, for about two miles from the village, and then terminated in a narrow lane as it turned towards the north-east, and passed into the town of Flatbush.

This street, in 1875, by act of the legislature, was widened to 100 feet, and extends directly north to the city-line of Brooklyn, where its connects with 20th st. It cost the abutting property-owners in the town of Gravesend about \$40,000 for these improvements, and it is now known as Gravesend avenue.

**Coney Island Plank Road**, extending from 15th Street, Brooklyn city-line, to Coney Island, with a toll-gate at each extremity of the road, was surveyed by Hon. Tunis G. Bergen, and map filed October 12, 1842. In 1850 it was laid out, 66 feet wide, completed, and long known as the *Coney Island Road*. After ten or twelve years' service, the planks were removed and the road turnpiked. It was the main thoroughfare to Coney Island for many years, or until the completion of the Boulevard. It was often thronged, of a fine afternoon in summer, with every description of carriages and horses; and was noted as the drive where the sporting-men of twenty years ago were accustomed to exhibit the fine qualities of their thoroughbreds.

On May 11th, 1869, an amendatory act was passed widening this road to 190 feet, and an assessment laid upon the property along the street in 1871. The next year, 1872, the work was accomplished; people were warned to set back their fences, and the large assessment was collected. But, of all the money levied and collected, not one dollar was ever expended to put the road in proper condition, and the few who refused to move their fencees have never been compelled to do it to this day. This road is now known upon the county map as Coney Island avenue.

**The Neck Road** to Sheepshead Bay was, in 1865, extended and widened from a narrow lane to a width corresponding to the increasing growth and travel of the town. Wm. H. Stillwell, surveyor.

In the year 1876, 60th street was opened, beginning at Gravesend avenue and terminating on 3d avenue, South Brooklyn.

A year or so later 86th street was opened. This street begins on the old Coney Island causeway, south of the village, and runs in a direct course through New Utrecht to Fort Hamilton. These streets are all down in the recent county survey, and are 60 feet wide.

**Ocean Avenue.**—It extends from the Willink entrance of Prospect Park, Brooklyn, to the Atlantic Ocean: 100 feet wide and a little over five miles long. It affords the eastern part of the town of Gravesend, especially Sheepshead Bay, a beautiful and convenient drive direct to Brooklyn. There is a strong probability that the inlet at the bay will be bridged, making Manhattan Beach its southern terminus.

It is, without doubt, the cheapest road of its kind ever built in Kings county. The commissioners all being men of honorable standing in the towns interested, and themselves owners of abutting property, were therefore careful that no extravagant outlays should be made. It was located by an act of the legislature, April 19, 1871; the map filed July 3d, 1873; and the road completed in 1876. The sidewalks are laid out fifteen feet wide, and the roadway seventy feet. The contract for construction was \$12,500; the cost of removing buildings, law and incidental expenses, making the sum total \$15,000. No public work of such ex-



tent has ever been done in this part of the country at so little expense. The commissioners were Benjamin G. Hitchings, Robert Magaw, and Philip S. Crook. The superintendent of survey was Samuel McElroy.

**Ocean Parkway.**—We come finally to speak of Ocean Parkway, fully acknowledged to be the finest drive in America. It is simply the extension of Prospect Park, in one broad magnificent avenue to the Atlantic Ocean. The idea of a drive on such a grand scale, for the benefit of Brooklyn and New York, had its origin in the fertile brain of J. S. T. Stranahan, then president of the Park Commissioners of Brooklyn. Application was made to the legislature, and an act passed May 11, 1869, amended May 14, 1872, giving to the Brooklyn Park Commissioners the necessary authority to "lay out, open, and improve a public highway or avenue from Prospect Park, in the City of Brooklyn, towards Coney Island, to the lands of the Prospect Park Fair Grounds Association." The understanding was, that while it stopped at King's highway, in Gravesend, for the present, it should ultimately be continued to Coney Island. It was therefore rightly called "Ocean Parkway."

The whole affair was placed in the hands, and under the full control, of the Park Commissioners, with power to fix the assessment district and levy all necessary assessments for the opening and construction of the road. The construction of this part of the avenue was begun in 1874, and completed at the beginning of the following year. The extension from King's highway to the ocean was begun in the early spring of 1876, and November 18th, of this year, the completed road, from Prospect Park to Coney Island, was thrown open to the public. The whole length of the road is five and one-half miles to the concourse, with a continuous width of 210 feet, and a reserve of thirty feet on the outside lines of the avenue; upon which, according to the legislative act, "no buildings or other erections, except porches, piazzas, fences, fountains and statuary, shall remain or be at any time placed; which space on each side of the avenue, and in addition thereto, shall be used for court-yards only, and may be planted with trees, shrubbery, and otherwise ornamented, at the discretion of the respective owners or occupants thereof; but such use and ornamentation shall be under the direction of the said Park Commissioners." The center-road, devoted to pleasure-driving, is seventy feet wide. Side-roads on each side the center-drive, twenty-five feet; and sidewalks, each fifteen feet. Between the main road and the two side-roads is reserved a space of thirty feet for ornamentation. Six rows of trees adorn the avenue, one on each side of the three drives. The assessment-district was laid at 1050 feet on each side the avenue. The parkway contains about 125 acres. The road terminates at the beach in what is known as "The Concourse." This consists of an area 2720 feet in length, and running 1000 feet back from high-water

line. A beautiful drive has been constructed across it lengthwise, seventy-five feet wide, with a sidewalk twenty-five feet on the ocean side, and the whole covered with asphalt pavement. Two shelters have been built in the centre of this concourse, one on each side of the spot where the road enters it. These are each seventy-five feet long and twenty-five feet wide, and open toward the sea, giving a most beautiful and uninterrupted view of the ocean and the opening of the "Narrows." The cost of this boulevard is something startling, especially to those who were compelled to bear the larger part of it. The following is a copy of the figures taken from the books of the County Treasurer, by Mr. Martin Schoonmaker: Cost of opening, \$265,705; Cost of construction, \$295,525. This covers the expense of avenue only from Prospect Park to King's highway. The cost of opening the avenue, viz., \$265,705, was paid entirely by the property-owners within the assessment-district, as follows: \$108,068 in cash; \$157,637 in land, for which the owners did not receive one cent. To meet the expense of construction, viz.: \$295,525, the county of Kings was authorized by the legislature to issue bonds to the amount of \$300,000, bearing interest at the rate of seven per cent., to be paid on or before the expiration of ten years, the interest payable semi-annually. Reckoning the interest on the cost of construction for ten years, at seven per cent., we shall find the whole cost of the avenue, from Prospect Park to the King's highway (the section first built), will reach the enormous total of \$768,097.50.

The cost of the extension from King's highway to the ocean, though much less per lineal foot than that first constructed, was: Amount levied for opening (for lands taken, including awards), over \$100,000; Cost of improvement, grading, etc., \$75,000.

This, with interest, added to the cost of the first section, would swell the total cost of the five-and-a-half miles of Ocean parkway and concourse to about *one million dollars*.

The property-owners within the assessment-district earnestly and persistently petitioned the legislature to relieve them from this heavy burden, which amounted virtually to a confiscation of their property; for the 1,000 acres, more or less, which were assessed to pay \$375,000 for constructing the whole length, with interest, if sold by public auction, would not pay the amount levied upon them. No relief was obtained, however, until 1882, when the legislature passed a law, laying two-thirds of the amount to be raised upon the county of Kings, and the other third upon the property benefitted. This gave general satisfaction, and the people, glad to be freed from this overshadowing burden, gladly paid the one-third cost which was levied upon them. The amended act of 1872, section 11, reads as follows: "After the said avenue shall have been opened, the said avenue, together with the court-yards fronting thereon, shall be under the exclusive charge and man-



agement of the said Park Commissioners, and they shall make and enforce rules and regulations for the proper use thereof, \* \* \* its subsequent maintenance shall be a charge upon the city of Brooklyn," &c. In accordance with this provision, in March, 1883, the Park Commissioners passed a law compelling heavy wagons to leave the center-drive for the side-roads, but a strong police-force will be necessary to carry it into effect. Notwithstanding its great width and three drives, it is hardly too wide to accommodate the vast number of carriages that throng it every pleasant summer afternoon. The common verdict is, that no finer drive of its length can be found in this country.

The same session of the legislature which passed the Ocean Parkway act, passed another, appointing commissioners for laying out streets and mapping the towns of Kings county. In 1870 this commission began active operations, and completed the work in about three years. Consequently we find our town covered with streets and avenues on the county map, in many instances sorely conflicting with the existing order of streets. To meet the present pressing demand for building-lots, many land-owners have opened these legalized streets upon their property; and others are opening streets which suit the situation of their land, without regard to the county survey. So we expect it will continue until all our farming-land is turned into building-lots, and we become a constituent part of what is destined to be the largest city in the world.

**Post-Offices.**—Previous to the year 1842 all mail matter intended for Gravesend was sent to the Flatbush post-office, and from there obtained by individuals, as best they could. It was considered, in those days, a neighborly duty for any one who happened to pass the office to call for the letters intended for his neighborhood, and see that they were delivered at his earliest convenience. Sometimes, however, the stage-driver was pressed into the service and made to do extra duty as postman. In the same manner, also, letters were taken to Flatbush to be mailed.

The probability is that few letters were written or received in Gravesend for the first 200 years. The people lived mainly within themselves. They married mostly among their own relatives and towns-people, and quietly settled down where they were born, very few having relatives more than a day's journey from their homes; and, since their business was mostly done in Brooklyn or New York, they had very little occasion to communicate by letter with the outside world. But the time at length came when a larger correspondence became necessary, and when this slow and often uncertain means of communicating with the post-office became very irksome to the people.

Therefore, in the year 1843, upon petition of the people, and through the influence of the late Henry C. Murphy, who was then serving his first term in Congress, a post-office was established at Gravesend, and

Mr. Martin Schoonmaker was appointed the first postmaster, keeping the office in his store, next to the Reformed church, on Gravesend avenue. After serving as post-master ten or twelve years, he resigned, and Mr. Gilbert Hicks, then a young man, was appointed to succeed him, July 12, 1854.

Mr. Hicks retained the office for several years, when he removed to Flatbush, and was for many years, till 1882, the able and faithful post-master of that village. Mr. John Bergen, then the village merchant, succeeded Mr. Hicks. He continued in office until July 16, 1869, when Dr. R. L. Van Kleek was installed as his successor, and still holds the position.

It speaks well for the popularity of Dr. Van Kleek, that, being a pronounced democrat in politics, he was yet appointed by, and has so long retained his position under, a republican administration, having now entered upon his fourteenth official year. During his term of service the business and efficiency of the office have been largely increased. It is now doing a thriving business, especially in summer, owing to the large number of summer-residents.

In 1800 another post-office was established in town at "Hotel Brighton," on Brighton Beach; but this was discontinued after a trial of one season. A system of lamp-post boxes was established at the same time, confined wholly to the Coney Island district, and this still continues in operation. The letters are regularly collected and distributed daily by a city carrier. For this purpose the post-office department appropriates \$500 annually. The whole arrangement is under the immediate supervision of the Brooklyn Post-Office.

A third post-office has also been established in the eastern part of the town, in the flourishing village of Sheepshead Bay. There has been here such rapid growth in population, within the last three or four years, that the distance of a mile and a half to the Gravesend Post-Office seemed an unnecessary tax upon their time and patience, and so a post-office in this village became a public necessity. Consequently their petition for one was favorably considered, and, in July, 1882, Dr. James F. Morgan was appointed first post-master.

**Public Schools.**—Whatever interest may have attached to the subject of education, and however important it may have appeared to the early settlers, their advantages in this direction were necessarily limited for many years, owing to the difficulties presented by the unsettled condition of things around them. It is fair to presume, however, that when the increase in population made such a step necessary, they met the wants of the rising generation with such facilities for learning as the needs of the hour required, and their circumstances would permit.

However, it was not until about eighty years after the first settlement of the town that we find any definite attempt to establish a permanent public-school system. Then, a joint stock company of nineteen per-



sions was formed, and an acre of ground purchased, with a house already upon it, to be devoted exclusively and forever to public instruction. We have before us the original deed of this house and ground, found among the old town-papers.

Its date and heading are as follows :

"The eighth day of April, in the first year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord, George the Second, and in the year of our Lord seventeen hundred and twenty-eight." It was given by Jacobus Emans, and was signed, sealed and delivered, in the presence of Aaron Emans and Samuel Hubbard, as witnesses.

This deed describes the property as "one house and two garden spots," and is given to the "freeholders and inhabitants of Gravesend, whose names are signed upon the back side hereof, to be used and employed to the use of a school by the owners thereof at all times forever hereafter, and for no other use or employment whatsoever."

It bounds the property "on the south by Nicholas Williamson, on the north by highway, west by highway, and east by the common yard, containing one acre, be it more or less."

The "common yard" was an acre in the center of each square, to which reference has already been made, where the cattle of the settlers were herded for the night for safe-keeping. A gate opened into this "common yard" from the rear of each dwelling, for the greater convenience of the house-holders.

The boundary of this school-lot fixes its precise location where the town-hall now stands. On the back of this venerable document are the names of the nineteen purchasers, with the sum each was to pay as his proportion. Attached to it is the following memorandum : "Eighth day of April, anno 1728, memorandum that the persons whose names are hereinunder signed, are the owners of the within-named house and garden-spots, each one to have Right according to the value of money he hath paid, as doth appear in proportion as is hereinunder noted down." The consideration in this transfer was £19.

This school-house accommodated the town for sixty years; when, in 1788, a new and larger building was erected upon the same site. It was a low, one-story wooden structure about 25x35 feet, without the slightest attempt at architectural display, and has been, until within a few years, a familiar landmark of the town. The date of its erection is ascertained from the following receipts in the town-clerk's office. The first is as follows : "Received, Gravesend, 27 Ang. 1788, of Roger Strong thirty-six shillings and three pence, in full, for the freight of boards, shingles, &c., bought for the school-house in said town, per me, John West," The second is dated in January of the following year, and is for work done on the new school-house : "Received, New Utrecht, 15 Jan. 1789, of Capt. Isaac Denyse, fourteen shillings and sixpence in full for

work done to Gravesend school-house, per me, Johanes Johnson."

This building is still in existence ; it was used for a school-house for about fifty years, when a new site was purchased and a new house erected. It was then, by common consent, turned into a town-hall, where the public business of the town was transacted ; although this, as we have seen, was in direct violation of the provisions of the original deed. It continued to serve this purpose for about thirty-five years longer, when it was considered too small and mean in appearance to serve the needs of a rapidly-growing town. Thus it stood on one of the most public sites in all the town, a familiar object to the eyes of nearly three generations. The *whipping-post* and *public stocks*, which formerly stood beside it, had long since disappeared, leaving the old building alone to tell the story of the past.

However, in the year 1873 the old house was sold to give place to the present large and commodious town-hall, and it was purchased at public sale by Charles M. Ryder for \$26.50 ; moved to his property near by, and fitted for a tenement-house. And thus keeping, for the most part, its old outward form and appearance, after almost a hundred years, we find it still doing faithful service in furnishing shelter to this remote generation.

In 1838, as before mentioned, a new school-site was purchased of Cornelius Emans, on the north-west side of the town-square, and a new school-house erected better suited to the needs of the district. In 1874 it was enlarged by the addition of a wing, to be used for a primary-department. Thus stands *District No. 1* to-day, with a good school-building, a primary and grammar-department, two teachers, and a large number of scholars.

*Teachers.*—The following list is taken from the old records, supplemented by the memory of several of the oldest inhabitants, and the names given as nearly as possible in the order of their service.

Messrs. Proctor ; Garahan ; Barnardus C. Lake ; Patrick Noonan ; Benj. Mercer ; David Turnbull ; Johnson ; Abram Emmans ; John Wyckoff ; Charles Goodrich ; Richard Kyles ; Dr. C. H. Schniopp ; James M. Fulton ; Spafford ; Brown ; Pillings ; Geo. Berget ; Norton ; Edward Benjamin ; Rowell ; Requay ; Bates ; Wm. H. Stillwell ; Andrew Hegeaman ; Gilbert H. Wickham ; Le Grand Payne.

*Assistant Teachers* were Miss Aletta Ditmars and Miss Nellie Storm.

Judge Wickham was for 21 years the faithful teacher of this school, until the close of 1876, when he resigned to take the position of Associate Justice of the Court of Sessions. In 1877 Mr. Payne became principal, with Miss Storm as assistant, and they still retain their positions.

*District No. 2.*—In 1811 it became necessary, for the greater convenience of the spreading population, to divide the district, or create a new one in the eastern part



of the town. Accordingly the residents in that neighborhood combined together for the erection of a new school-house. Land was purchased of Mr. Isaac Deuyse; a building erected 18x30 feet, and paid for by subscription. In 1847, to meet the demand for more room, an addition of 10 feet was made to the length of the house, at a cost of some \$200, making a long, low building, uninviting in external appearance, and very gloomy within. Therefore, one row of seats only was made next to and facing the wall; thus enabling the pupil to give his undivided attention to his studies; while at the same time it afforded the teacher the opportunity to keep, unobserved, a watchful eye over those who were more inclined to be mischievous than studious. This old building continued to serve the purpose of a school-house till 1879, when it was abandoned for the new one.

The deed of the lot was made out in the name of Mr. John S. Garretson, and it remains in possession of his heirs to-day.

In 1879 a new site was purchased on Ocean avenue, and a large and convenient school-house built, which does credit to the district. It is a two-story wooden building, 35x55 feet, well painted, and kept in good repair. Jacobus Voorhees was the architect and builder. Its cost was \$2,700. Teachers of this school, from the beginning, have been Messrs. John D. Watkins; Martin; Merceer; Benson; John S. Fulton; Isaac S. Perry; R. H. Stanton; Joulon; Gorman; Edmund Williams; W. H. Stillwell; Kelley; P. D. Voorhees; B. F. Ladd; Rev. Charles Battersby; William Vradenburgh; Brown; Rev. J. H. Battersby; John B. France; A. H. Battersby; Johannes Kouwenhoven and Edward Bennett. The two latter are now in charge of the school.

*Districts No. 3 and 4.* Application was made October 25th, 1870, for a division of District No. 1, and the establishment of a separate district in the village of Unionville; and also, at the same time, for a division of District No. 2, and a new school opened at Sheepshead Bay. Mr. Voorhees Overbaugh, who was then school-commissioner, granted the application and set off from District No. 1, the Unionville District, called No. 3.

A neat one-story school-house was at once built in a cedar-grove, and for the past twelve years has been in a flourishing condition. The names of the teachers are as follows: A. Ketcham; Reynolds; Miss Addie Sinderin; Miss Elizabeth Campbell; Wm. Span; Miss Maggie Thompson; Miss Kate Voorhees; Benjamin Wallace, and Miss Cora Morris—the two last named now in charge of the school.

In the same year Mr. Overbaugh divided District No. 2, making a new one at Sheepshead Bay, called No. 4. The old M. E. church building was purchased October 31st, 1870, by the new trustees, and a school immediately started. This arrangement continued until the year 1878, when (October 1st) a new one-story

building was completed on a new site upon the same avenue. This house was neat in appearance, and ample for the accommodation of the district. The trustees, by a system of wise economy, while maintaining a first-grade school, at the same time have saved money enough from the annual town-allowance, and the State money, to pay every dollar of their indebtedness for the new house, without tax upon the district. The following teachers have been here employed: Rev. Mr. Morris; Rev. J. H. Battersby; John B. France, and the present teacher, Isaac McKane.

*District No. 5.* In 1874 a branch school from District No. 1, and under the care of the trustees, was established at Coney Island, and an extra allowance of \$500 was made to the district for its support. The school was first held in the little Union Chapel, formerly built for religious services, but which at this time was unoccupied. In 1876 the town appropriated \$500 for its purchase, which was accordingly done. In 1878 application was made by the residents of Coney Island to be set off as a district by themselves. The application was granted by the school-commissioner, C. Warren Hamilton. They immediately elected trustees from their own number, and took matters into their own hands. The chapel continued to be used for school purposes until the year 1882. In the early part of this year a beautiful two-story house was erected, with blinds and a handsome cupola, at a cost of some \$8,000. The work was done by our enterprising builder and town supervisor, John Y. McKane. This is one of the largest and finest school-buildings in town.

*District No. 6.*—About the same time another school was started in South Greenfield, the northern part of the town, as a branch of District No. 2, and \$500 were annually appropriated to carry on the work. In 1878 or 1879 this portion of the town was, upon application, set off from District No. 2, and assumed the dignity of a school-district, known as No. 6. The trustees very soon built a fine, two-story brick school-house, which, from an architectural point of view, is, without doubt, the handsomest public building we have in town. The cost, when furnished, will probably not be less than \$10,000. Owing, however, to what would seem to be a most unjust and foolish opposition on the part of a portion of the district, the new school-house remains empty and useless; while the scholars are crowded into a small, ill-ventilated building, which would better become the enterprise and finances of two hundred years ago.

Mrs. Jane Wise was the first teacher, followed by Mr. Thomas Taylor, and he in turn by the present teacher.

Several *private schools* have been, from time to time, established, which have fulfilled their mission and passed into history. There are now, at least, two flourishing private schools for younger children, in addition to the six school-districts to which attention has been given.



The salary of the teachers was formerly raised by a direct tax upon each scholar, in addition to the State allowance. In 1850, however, we learn that a portion of the money received for liquor licenses was devoted to school purposes. But, after a time, this money was applied to the support of the Inebriates Home, at Bath; and from that time a portion of the town revenue, arising from the rental of the common lands at Coney Island, has been annually set apart for this worthy purpose. One thousand dollars is the annual allowance to each school-district, a sum which, in the aggregate, if wisely used, would be sufficient to meet our present needs.

Despite its financial advantages, the educational interests of Gravesend have not kept pace with the growth and importance of the town. No town in Kings county can offer a finer location or better inducements for an institution of a high order than Gravesend. And yet, there is neither academy or high-school of any grade above the common district-school. The revenue of Coney Island should, in the hands of honest commissioners, furnish ample means for a most liberal endowment of such an institution, without a dollar of tax upon the people, as is necessarily and willingly done in other towns, where no such resources are available.

**Revolutionary Incidents.**—The landing of the British forces, August 22, 1776, was made at Gravesend Bay, within a mile of the village; through which passed the column under Lord Cornwallis, towards Flatbush. An encampment was made by a British detachment, on the marsh thither, in the large farm-yard of Joost Stillwell, now owned by his grandson, Nicholas R. Stillwell. The old homestead of that day still remains in good preservation. In the disastrous battle of L. I., on the 27th, there were a number of Gravesend men among the soldiers who were surrounded by General Clinton's flanking movement, but their acquaintance with the hills and woods enabled them to escape safely to their homes within a day or two after. Nicholas Stillwell, Rntgert Stillwell, Barnardus Ryder, Peter Williamson, Stephen Donly and John Voorhees, were active patriots during those days.

During the British occupation of Kings county, which followed the battle of Long Island, the people of Gravesend were much troubled by lawless tories, or "plunderers" as they were called, who made frequent marauding forages upon the farms of the villagers. One of these expeditions was defeated by the vigilance of a young maiden, Altje Stillwell (afterwards the grandmother of Mr. Jacobus Lake), who displayed a signal light; and the villagers, rallying, gave the tories such a warm reception that they fled in dismay, leaving one of their number dangerously wounded. He concealed himself among the drift on the shore at Fort Hamilton until morning, when a farmer going to the shore for drift found him, and, pitying his suffering condition, took him home, and concealed him in his own

barn till he was able to be taken to the English camp.

On another occasion Mr. Court Lake discovered an English soldier coming from the Old Mill—the ruins of which may now be seen—carrying a bag of meal, which he had stolen. In attempting to stop him by force, a hand-to-hand encounter took place, in which, at length, both fell to the ground, with the soldier uppermost. The latter drew from his pocket a large knife, which he attempted to open with one hand and his teeth. Mr. Lake, by a desperate effort, threw the soldier from him and gained his feet. Then, seizing the enemy's gun, which had fallen near by, he quickly fired. The charge entered the soldier's neck, making a terrible wound. Mr. Lake at once informed the nearest neighbor, by the name of Turnbull, who came with his wagon and took the wounded man to his own camp within the English lines. Whether the shot proved fatal or not, Mr. Lake was never able to learn.

There are still extant, among the town-records, two old papers, one of which is dated in 1778, and reads as follows: "A return of the officers and an exact Acct. of what every Inhabitant of Gravesend has against each officer, for his Board at six shillings N. Y. currency, and weeks from the time they were Billited until the 31 day of March, 1778, inclusive." It gives the name of each officer, his rank, time billeted, name of the inhabitant where quartered, time he had been there and amount due. In this "Return" we find the names of eighty-eight officers, in rank from ensign to captain, and the names of thirty inhabitants where they were boarding. Some of the officers were charged with over a year's board. It is signed by Joost Stillwell, Captain.

A similar paper, dated 1782, reads as follows: "A list of the money due the Inhabitants of the township of Gravesend for the Boarding of Continentals and other officers, Prisoners, and some friends, as will hereunto appear by the following accounts. Gravesend, July 13, 1782." Only forty officers are mentioned in this paper, and about the same number of inhabitants as before. The board of these officers eventually became a State charge; as we find that in August, 1782, Congress voted \$38,000 "towards payment of persons in Kings County for subsisting American prisoners during the late war."

During the Revolutionary war the rebel freebooters, Heyler and Marriner, were a terror to the tories in the neighborhood of New York, and doubtless rendered material aid to the American cause, on many occasions, although we would not attempt to justify their mode of procedure.

Heyler's most brilliant exploit was the capture of a British sloop-of-war, of 20 tons, off Coney Island. He had only two whale-boats, but, spying the sloop lying quietly at anchor in a secure place, as they supposed, he sent one boat to reconnoitre. They found the ship careless and playing cards in the cabin, and with



watch set. The other boat being signalled to, came up. Capt. Heyler and his men boarded the sloop from both sides, taking them all prisoners without loss of life, and even without resistance. A few articles were removed and the ship fired. There were on board \$40,000, with many valuable articles, all of which were lost. It is said that the captain of the ship, while being conveyed a prisoner to the American head-quarters, loudly lamented his folly and carelessness. These facts rest on the authority of Gen. Jeremiah Johnson, who received them direct from one of Heyler's men.

After the war was over, the farmers were obliged to appear before the Governor at Albany and prove their loyalty to the Colonial government, before they could retain their lands; or, pay a certain sum of money to keep them. Samuel Stryker, of this town, whose farm lay west of the village, started for Albany for this purpose (as related by his great-grandson), but was taken at Poughkeepsie with a severe attack of typhoid fever. Before he had sufficiently recovered, to be able to give the matter his attention, the appointed time for proving his loyalty had passed, and the consequence was he had to pay twice for his farm. Though afterwards assured by competent legal authority that he could recover, under the circumstances, he never made the attempt.

In the year 1789, on Tuesday, October 20, as we learn from his private diary, General Washington visited Gravesend on his general tour of inspection throughout Long Island. He stopped in the center of the town-square, near the school-house, where the town-hall now stands; and the school-children were all dismissed that they might pay their respects to His Excellency the President of the United States. Mr. Coert Lake was one of those fortunate enough to shake hands with him; an honor which he never forgot, and which he was always proud to relate to his children and grandchildren.

Several Hessian soldiers remained after the war was over, married and settled in Gravesend, and made honest and respectable citizens.

**War of 1812.**—There were also several residents of Gravesend actively engaged in the War of 1812, some of whom lived to a great age, and have but lately passed away. The last one, Evert Stellenwerf, died March, 1883, having reached the ripe age of 97 years.

The following is a partial list, probably including nearly all, of those who served in the War of 1812: Richard Stillwell; Nicholas Stillwell; Rutgert Stillwell; Rutgert Stillwell, 2d; Garret Williamson; Isaac Van Dyk; Henry Van Dyk; John Donly; Rem Van Cleef; Coert Lake; Hendrick Van Cleef; Evert Stellenwerf; Stephen Ryder. "Aunt Katie Ryder," widow of the last-mentioned, Stephen Ryder, was buried April 29, 1883, having reached her 93d year. She regularly drew her husband's pension for services in this war up to the present year. And now, so far as this town is

concerned, there is no living connecting link between the present generation and the War of 1812.

Some amusing anecdotes are told of camp-life in Brooklyn. The soldiers had looked with envious eyes, for some time, upon a flock of geese which pastured near their camp, and longed for a change of diet from the common soldier's fare. So, one day, a man named Conklin, full of fun and fruitful in expedients, procured a fish-hook, to which he attached a strong cord; having baited well the hook, he sallied forth among the flock, trailing his baited hook. The old gander of the flock, seeing the rare opportunity for a relish, embraced it without unnecessary delay. His object accomplished, Conklin started upon a run for the camp; the gander following, with out-spread wings, at an equal pace. An old lady, near by, seeing the man running and the goose in full chase, but not observing the strong attractive power which compelled the following, cried after him: "Don't be afraid, my good man, he won't hurt you!" Although thus kindly assured of his safety, the soldier continued to flee and the goose to pursue, until both disappeared in the camp.

In our late Civil War the town furnished her full quota of men, either by enlistment or by furnishing substitutes, as the law provided.

In the year 1700 we find, in the list of officers of the State militia, the following: "Of ye foot Company in ye town of Gravesend, John Lokes, Capt. Chr. Bemoyns, Lieut. Albert Coerten, Ensign."

**Miscellaneous.**—An obituary notice from one of the Brooklyn papers of sixty years ago read thus:

"Died in Gravesend Aug. 23, 1823, Rutgert Stillwell, aged 73. It is a remarkable fact that he has not been off his own farm in more than 40 years. No persuasion or inducement could move his resolution in this particular, which is supposed to have been caused, in the first instance, by some hasty determination. He was a bachelor, and devoted much of his time to reading and study: possessing a strong mind and memory singularly retentive, so much so as to be often consulted in doubtful cases. He was pleasant in manner, very fond of company and conversation, and apparently as well acquainted with the city and country in his neighborhood as if he had really visited them."

This statement has been authenticated by relatives now living.

**Church History.**—The oldest and most prominent church in town is the Reformed (Dutch) church, located in the village, on one of the town-squares. Its early history is somewhat obscure, and historians widely differ in their opinion as to the date of its organization.

Dr. Corwin, in his *Manual of the Reformed Church*, covering the period between 1625 and 1878, puts the date as far back as 1655. But, from the data before us, we cannot accept such a conclusion.

After much careful research, we have been unable to find anything which would warrant more than a mere inference of its possibility. On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence, amounting to a very strong proba-



bility, that there was no regular organization until the latter part of the 18th century.

In the first place, as we have already seen, the early settlers of Gravesend were English; and, consequently, could not be supposed to have any special leaning towards the Dutch church. Indeed, if the early accounts we have of their religious belief be true, we must regard them as lacking some of the most essential elements of Dutch theology. In a report of the state of the churches in New Netherland, made to the Classis of Amsterdam in 1657, by Dominicus Megapolensis and Drisius (*Doc. Hist.*, Vol. III., 1850), we find the religious condition of the Gravesend colony summed up as follows: "Those at Gravesend are reported Mennonists; yea, they, for the most part, reject Infant Baptism, the Sabbath, the office of Preacher, and the Teachers of God's word, saying that through these have come all sorts of contention into the world. Whenever they meet together the one or the other reads something to them." This, if it be a statement of fact, as no doubt it is, does not strongly favor the theory of a Dutch church in Gravesend at this early date.

We know, also, from other sources, that Lady Moody, while, perhaps, not denying the ordinance of infant baptism, was yet accused of denying that it was an ordinance of God. It was this that brought her in conflict with the Puritan religious sentiment of Massachusetts, and afterwards, for a time at least, somewhat disturbed her amicable relations with the Dutch authorities of New Netherland. We are well convinced, also, that there was a strong free-thinking or atheistic element among them, which doubtless prepared the way for Gravesend to become early one of the strongholds of Quakerism on Long Island. We do not suppose, as has been erroneously believed, that Lady Moody and her fellows settled Gravesend as a colony of Quakers; for George Fox, the founder of that body, had not yet entered upon his public ministry, nor did the order assume the dignity of an organized body until some years after this time. But, we may well believe, that their previous religious experience fitted them to take kindly to the peculiar principles of that society upon its first introduction among them.

We can find no record of this order in Gravesend before the year 1657. In August, of that year, an English vessel landed in New Netherland, having on board eleven Quaker preachers. While they scattered in different directions, it fell to the lot of Richard Hodgson and two companions, to come to Gravesend. His preaching here seems to have met with success, as he declares his testimony was received. This, according to Hodgson's journal, was the first Quaker meeting on record in America.

This visit of Friends to Gravesend seems to have created no disturbance; although the watchful Dutch Governor, Stuyvesant, was on the alert to detect such heresies. Six months after, however, John Tilton, the

town-clerk, was called to account for entertaining a Quakeress, a female preacher. He pleaded, however, that she got into his house in his absence; and he was permitted to go with simply a fine of £12 and cost of court. About a year after Hodgson landed, two other Friends, Cole and Thurston, came from Virginia. Gov. Stuyvesant had them arrested and sent to Staten Island, from whence they soon escaped, and came in an Indian canoe to Gravesend. Here, according to their own testimony, "they found some Friends in the truth, by whom they were much refreshed." They further state that "meetings were held at the house of Lady Moody, who managed all things with such prudence and observance of time and place as to give no offence to any person of another religion." Thus, in 1658, just before she died, Lady Moody seems to have adopted the peculiar tenets of the Friends.

In the following year, Mary Dyer and John Taylor made a tour of Long Island, and terminated their journey at Gravesend. From this time, it has been said, this town became the "Mecca of Quakerism." In 1661 a Quaker meeting was held in Gravesend, and Gov. Stuyvesant sent his Sheriff, Waldron, to arrest the preacher. He, however, escaped, and left only his cloak, which the officer bore in triumph to the fort. Samuel Spicer was arrested for entertaining him, and fined £12 for his grievous offence. John Tilton and wife were again arrested, and, by sentence, banished for harboring Quakers. The sentence was probably never carried into effect; for, in two years, he was again called to account for the same thing.

The mother of Samuel Spicer was also arrested, and charged with trying to entice even young girls to join the Quakers.

Up to this point we can see no evidence of a Dutch church in town. Neither could they have had a minister, as appears from the following fact: An appeal was made, April 12, 1660, to Gov. Stuyvesant, probably by the few Dutch settlers who had come among them, for a minister, basing their appeal upon their great need of a religious teacher, "because the people led such Godless lives, on account of the diversity of religious opinions among them." Gov. Stuyvesant replied that measures would be taken at once to supply their spiritual need; but there is not the slightest evidence that he ever fulfilled his promise.

In 1672 Geo. Fox, while on his first visit to this country, came direct from Maryland to Gravesend. He says, in his journal, that after a long and tedious journey through the wilderness of Jersey, they came to the house of Richard Harthorn, at Middletown, in East Jersey. After a night's rest, Mr. Harthorn took them, horses and all, in his own boat, and set them upon Long Island. He continues: "That night we got to friends at Gravesend, with whom we tarried that night, and then, with some friends from Gravesend, started next day for half-year's meeting at Oyster Bay." After vis-



iting Rhode Island, he returned again to Long Island. He says: "we passed from Flushing to Gravesend, where we had three precious meetings." This was in the latter part of July, 1672. Up to this time there is no evidence whatever that there was a Dutch church, or any other, in town.

From 1677 to 1684 the records of the Flatbush church, the oldest Dutch church on Long Island, give, in unbroken line, the election of elders and deacons for the four Dutch churches of Kings county—Flatbush, Flatlands, New Utrecht and Brooklyn—and mention no other church. Had there been, at this time, a church at Gravesend, it would certainly have been mentioned. In a census of Kings county, dated 1698, in a list of 31 freeholders in Gravesend, we find that nearly two-thirds of all, or 19 out of 31, are represented as English. This fact militates somewhat against the theory of a Dutch church at this time.

We furthermore learn that, even in 1704, there were still but the four Dutch churches above mentioned in Kings county, from the following report on the state of the Church of England in the province of New York, as laid before the clergy convened at New York, October 5th, 1704, by appointment of Lord Cornbury. In reference to Long Island, the report says: "Kings county, consisting of *four* Dutch congregations, supplied formerly by one Dutch minister, but now without any, by the death of the late incumbent (Dominie Lappardus); they are sometimes supplied by the Rev. Mr. Vesey (rector of Trinity, New York), when he finds all the English, and some of the Dutch, well affected to the Church of England."

The English settlers in Gravesend may therefore have availed themselves, occasionally, of the services of Rev. Mr. Vesey; but up to this time, 1704, we are satisfied there was no Dutch church, or stated preaching, in town.

Two years after this, however, they began to hold regular services under the ministry of Dominie Freeman and Antonides, who were then acting (though not in harmony) as pastors of the Dutch churches of Kings county. These services continued from 1706 to 1714.

As evidence of this, we have found, on a detached fly-leaf of one of our old church books of record, the following entry made by Abram I. Labagh, who became pastor of the church in 1842. He there states that "receipts for Dominie's salary, most of them mentioning Mr. Freeman's name as minister, are preserved from May 13, 1706, in unbroken succession, down to December 25, 1714." Since this latter date, the receipts are in the names of Revs. Freeman and Antonides, and reach to July 1st, 1741. Mr. Labagh further states that, among the old papers of the church, has been found one in the words following:

"Know all men by these presents, that, we the Inhabitants of the Town of Gravesend, in Kings County, on the Island of Nassau, hereunderwritten, do nominate, constitute

and appoint John Lake and John Simonson Elders of said town, and by these presents have nominated, constituted and appointed the said John Lake and John Simonson to compound a league with Mr. Cornelius Van Brunt and Mr. Peter Cortelyou, deputies of the town of New Utrecht, for the third part of all their divine service, which they have or shall have of Mr. Freeman and Mr. Antonides, ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; that is to have the said services in our said town of Gravesend, and as the said inhabitants, do promise and engage ourselves to hold for good faith, what said Elders shall do in agreeing for said service, and other considerations in the town's behalf, and for benefit of said ministers; and we promise to perform every article or articles as the said Elders shall conclude of with said deputies. In witness our hand the 4th day of January, anno 1713." Signed:

Samuel Gerritsen, Cornelius Van Cleef, Daniel Griggs, Stephen Corten, Ferdinand Van Sicklin, Jan. Ryder, Nicholas Williamson, Thomas Stillwell, Benj. Griggs, Barent Janlas, Seger Gerretson, Jan. Lucasson, Wm. Williamson, Adam Nickelson, Samuel Polings, Bernardus Ryder."

These papers, above referred to, were long ago lost or destroyed, as they can now nowhere be found among any of the church papers, and all we have to show is the copy above given.

But these facts prove two things, *first*, that regular divine service began to be held in Gravesend in 1706; and *second*, that in 1714 a formal arrangement was entered into, between the *inhabitants* of Gravesend and the officers of the church of New Utrecht, for one-third of the regular services of the two Dutch ministers on Long Island. The question now arises, had they a church building at this time; or, did they hold their services in private houses after the manner of the Quakers? Our theory is, that, about the time they began their regular church services, they also erected their first house of worship. We know that, in 1720, a church building was already in existence. We are indebted to Judge William H. Stillwell for the discovery of an old deed (*rec. in the Kings county Register's office*), dated June 25, 1720, whereby Samuel Poling conveyed to Thomas Stillwell, among other property, "two garden spots, bounded northerly by land of Thomas Stillwell, and southerly by ground wherein the meeting-house stands. East by the highway, and west by the common yard and the street leading to the common yard." He also sells "one right in the meeting-house and ground."

It is clearly evident, therefore, that a building existed at this time, and the strong probability is that it was built about the time regular preaching began. The description of the above property fixes the precise location of the first Dutch church upon the property now belonging to that body, and occupied by the present lecture room. The location of the church property, therefore, has never been changed since it was first purchased, although it has been since somewhat enlarged. Consequently, the theory that the first house of worship was moved, after it was built, to the site of the present church, we consider untenable.



We further conclude there was no church organization until more than 50 years after regular preaching began. The grounds for this conclusion are as follows:

*First.* The authority granted in 1714 to John Lake and John Simonson, as we have seen, to negotiate with Cornelius Van Brunt and Peter Cortelyou, elders of the New Utrecht church for the services of Dominies Freeman and Antonides, was given by sixteen of the *inhabitants* of Gravesend. Now, had there been an organized church here at this time, this arrangement would have been the legitimate work of the consistory, and not of the inhabitants of the town.

*Secondly.* The old deed of 1720, above referred to, evidences that the church building then standing did not belong to a corporate body, as would be likely, had there been a church organization, but to private individuals; else how could Samuel Poling sell to Thomas Stillwell "*one right* in the meeting-house and ground."

*Thirdly.* In the oldest record we have of the Gravesend church, we find entered, under the heading of "Communicants," June 27, 1763, the names of 21 members, 15 male and 6 female. In another part of the same book, and under the same date, we find the names of 3 elders and 3 deacons elected. These entries are the first indication we can anywhere find of either consistory or communicants.

We consider it, therefore, a warrantable conclusion, that 1763 is the date of the regular church organization. It is true that the names of baptized children began to be entered upon the record in 1714, the date of the New Utrecht compact; but, beside this, there is no record of any kind till the date we have supposed to be that of the formal organization of the church in 1763; and from this time the list of communicants, and that of elders and deacons, continues unbroken to the present day.

The old church record was kept in the Dutch language till about 1823, when it first began to be written in English.

A second church building was erected, most probably about the time the church was formed, in 1763. Judge Nicholas Stillwell, now advanced in age, tells us he well remembers hearing his uncle, Rutgert Stillwell, speak of the building of the second church upon the site of the old one; and of its smaller dimensions. The circumstances connected with its erection were indelibly impressed upon his mind, from the fact that he was then a school-boy, and during intermission was accustomed to cross the street and watch the builders at their work. Mr. Stillwell was born in 1751; and, if the building was erected, as we have supposed it, in 1763, he would then be a school-boy of 12 years, just the age to be forcibly impressed with an event of this character.

We have been thus particular, because, hitherto, this whole matter has been involved in doubt and uncer-

tainty, and if the result of recent investigations can throw any light upon the subject, it will be heartily welcomed.

There are many still living who remember well the second house of worship, and who will recognize the following description: It was somewhat different from the ordinary style of church architecture among the Dutch of this date, viz., the round, or six, or eight-square style, which was most commonly adopted. This was oblong in shape, very low, with double-pitched roof, facing the south, and having double doors in the center. The sides, as well as the roof, were shingled, according to the custom of those days. The inside was ceiled, top and sides, with boards, and painted a dull, dingy brown. There was but one aisle, and this extended through the center of the church. In this aisle were two strong pillars supporting the roof, one of them only about 10 feet in front of the pulpit. A gallery crossed the south end, where, it is said, the young men were wont to congregate. Under the gallery, on the west side, were the *negro-quarters*, having the appearance of being fenced in, and belonging exclusively to them. In the north end of the church was the pulpit, a plain, octagonal, box-like structure, only large enough to accommodate one man at a time. Upon the building was a spire, which contained a belfry and bells; and over all, a weather-cock of burnished brass, no doubt to warn the devout worshippers against the sin of Peter. This old church, within the memory of those now living, was without stoves, or any other heating appliances. The women carried their foot-stoves, which, before service, they were very careful to fill at the nearest neighbor's; while the men were compelled to sit, during all the long service, with nothing to generate heat but the grand old Calvinistic preaching of the Dutch Dominic, or the anticipation of a warm dinner after the service was over.

In this church the celebrated Whitfield preached on two occasions while in this country. Mr. Rutgert Stillwell, above mentioned, remembered hearing him, and the text he used on one occasion was from John xii: 32. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

This building continued to be used for worship until the close of the year 1832, when it gave place to the present edifice. The subject of building a new and more modern house of worship was first officially considered at a meeting of consistory, held Nov. 30, 1832, at the house of Elder George Snydam, in the first year of the pastorate of Rev. I. P. Labagh.

The consistory then appointed a committee consisting of Garret Stryker, Nicholas S. Williamson, and Samuel L. Garritsen, "to estimate the cost of a suitable house, and what, in their opinion, each individual ought to subscribe towards it." After various meetings in reference to it, and the appointment of several committees, it was finally resolved, at a meeting held Feb. 5,



1833, "to build a house 45x62 feet; to build it by day's work and not by contract; and that Henry Van Dyk should be the builder."

The above committee of estimate were appointed a building-committee, to take full charge of the whole matter, and draw upon the treasurer as necessity required. The sum of \$3,833 had already been raised among the congregation.

An effort was at first made to change the location, but the matter was finally settled by enlarging their present ground by the purchase of some adjoining land of Mr. C. A. Emans.

The third house of worship was completed near the close of 1833. The building-committee were appointed to take charge of the sale of the pews, and also, as soon as convenient, to procure a bell from the city of New York.

The pews were rated at \$6,550, but the subsequent sale realized \$8,062; so that this church began its history free from debt, and has so continued to the present day.

The first Sunday in January, 1834, was appointed for the dedication, and Rev. Dr. De Witt, of New York, was invited to preach the sermon.

The Consistory of the church at this time was composed of the following members: Rev. Isaac P. Labagh, *President*; Garrett Stryker, John S. Gerritson, John S. Voorhees, Stephen Stryker, *Elders*; John Van Dyk, Samuel I. Gerritsen, Nicholas S. Williamson, Richard J. Stillwell, *Deacons*; Samuel G. Stryker, *Clerk*.

In 1849, in consequence of the cracking of the old bell, through the instrumentality of the ladies of the congregation a new one was procured, remarkable for its clear silvery tone. It can be heard for miles around, calling the devout to worship, and rebuking the great tide of Sabbath desecration which flows past it to the sea.

Although the present building is exceedingly plain in external appearance, yet its interior presents a pleasant, home-like attractiveness, which gives universal satisfaction.

**Ministers.**—The church was supplied, as we have seen, by Revs. Freeman and Antonides from 1705-41; Arondeous from 1741-6; and occasionally supplied by Van Sinderen from 1746-65. In 1767 Martinus Schoonmaker, who was two years before licensed to preach, became pastor of the church of Gravesend and Harlem. In the old church book are his half-yearly receipts for salary, written in Dutch, invariably given for seventeen pounds and ten shillings, making his yearly salary for Gravesend, £35. In 1783 he became pastor of the six Dutch churches in Kings county, and could then give this church only one Sabbath in six. In 1787 Rev. Peter Lowe became his colleague, and occasionally preached in Gravesend, and is now most affectionately remembered by some of our oldest inhabitants.

Dominie Schoonmaker preached in the Dutch language, Rev. Mr. Lowe in the English. In 1808 the collegiate arrangement between the churches of Kings county was dissolved; and each church carried on its own work in its own way. Dominie Schoonmaker continued to supply all the Dutch churches in the county, until he died, in 1824. Dominie John Bassett preached in Gravesend from 1811-'24. In 1832 the church made a formal call upon Rev. Isaac P. Labagh, who accepted, and became the first settled resident pastor of this church. He was called at an annual salary of \$500. He remained till 1843, when he was succeeded by Rev. Abram I. Labagh, who had been pastor of the Reformed church at St. Thomas, W. I. He continued pastor for seventeen years. In 1859 Rev. M. G. Hansen, a recent graduate of Rutgers College (1856), and New Brunswick Seminary (1839), became pastor of the church. He resigned in 1871, and the pulpit was vacant for nearly a year.

In 1872 Rev. A. P. Stockwell, a graduate of Amherst College (1862), and Union Theological Seminary (in 1865), and at that time associate pastor of the Reformed church at Millbrook, Dutchess county, accepted a call to the pastorate of this church. He was installed February 29, 1872, and still remains pastor, having entered upon the twelfth year of his ministry to this people.

The financial condition of the church was never better than at present, 1883; with not a dollar of debt, and with \$500, a legacy recently left the church by Walter Nichols, Esq., of Jamaica, now in bank. The benevolent contributions for the past few years have also been largely in excess of any previous period of the same length in the history of the church.

The additions to the membership for the past eleven years have been about 125; and we are happy to say that the church at the present time shows a very united, prosperous and progressive condition.

**Parsonage.**—At a meeting of the consistory, held September 21, 1844, the question of building a parsonage was taken into consideration, and a resolution passed, that it was expedient to proceed forthwith to build, and a committee was appointed to find suitable location. At a subsequent meeting, held September 28, they reported in favor of two acres of land belonging to Mr. John I. Lake, which could be purchased for \$600. This report was adopted, and the committee granted full power to purchase. The old church building-committee were appointed to take charge of this work, and authorized to proceed at once to business.

The parsonage was to be built, like the church, by day's work, and Lawrence and Jacobs Ryders were appointed builders. The house was completed during this year—a substantial wooden-building, two stories and basement, and shows to-day the honest and thorough labor done upon it.

**Chapels.**—At a meeting of consistory, held June



13, 1853, Mr. John Bergen and Mr. John Lake were appointed a committee, with power to act in conjunction with the ladies of the congregation, in taking the necessary steps to secure a site and build a lecture-room in the village.

After much opposition, and a strong protest against it, on account of lack of space, the site was finally located on the church-grounds, and on the very spot where stood the first and second church-buildings. It was completed in 1854, a neat and comfortable house, about 25x45 feet. In 1879 a gallery was made across one end, and fitted up for an infant-class-room, having sliding-doors so arranged that the upper and lower rooms can be thrown into one, during the opening and closing exercises of the Sabbath-school.

In 1868 another lecture-room was built in the eastern district, in which to hold the sessions of the Sabbath-school of that neighborhood, the weekly prayer-meetings, and a monthly preaching-service. The land, 50x125 feet, was donated by Mr. Simon C. Gerritsen, and a neat building, 25x36 feet, was erected thereon.

James S. Voorhees was the builder, and the cost \$1,820.

The Sheepshead Bay M. E. Church was organized in 1840 with five or six members, at the house of Samuel Leonard. The first church-building was a small wooden edifice, costing about \$800, and erected in 1844, the lot being purchased in September of that year. It was afterwards sold to District No. 4, and used as a day-school until the erection of a new school-house. In 1869 the present church-building was erected on McKane avenue. It is a small frame-building like the first, with seating capacity for about 150 or 200 persons. The society, when first organized, was called the *Methodist Protestant Church*, and so continued till 1862, when it became the *Independent Methodist Church of Gravesend*. Rev. Charles Battersby was then the pastor. It retained this name for three years, and then became the *Methodist Episcopal Church*, which is its present status. The first superintendent of the Sabbath-school was Samuel Leonard. This office has been, for many years past, and is now, most creditably filled by Mr. John Y. McKane, supervisor of the town. The school numbers about fifty scholars, with 300 volumes in the library.

Regular *pastors*: Revs. Messrs. Russell; Stancliff; Baker; Morris; C. Battersby; N. Orehard; Morris (second time); J. Henson; J. H. Battersby; J. Nelson; Fawcett; C. Backman; and the present pastor, C. W. Powell. During a part of this time the pulpit was supplied by local ministers, whose names are not recorded.

The present condition of the church may be considered favorable, and there is a movement already on foot to build a new church, in a more suitable and convenient location.

The M. E. Church, at Unionville, was organized

in 1844, and the house of worship erected the same year. It is called "The Fisherman's Church." The name was taken from the fact that many fishermen, from farther east on Long Island, were accustomed to seek the quiet waters of Gravesend bay to spend the Sabbath; and to give these men a place and encouragement to worship on the Sabbath, seems to have been a strong inducement to build the church and give it its present name. The church was dedicated by Rev. Henry Chase, of the N. Y. East Conference, for many years pastor of the Mariner's church, in Roosevelt street, New York. The first pastor of the church was Lorenzo D. Nickerson, still living. He belonged to the circuit which included Unionville, two years before he joined Conference, and two after. He stands on the minutes as having charge of New Utrecht, which included the Unionville members, in 1844. The next year Fort Hamilton was substituted for New Utrecht.

The first superintendent of the Sunday-school was Mr. Randall, of Gravesend. It is a live church, entering heart and soul into every good work.

*Pastors*: 1846-7, E. O. Bates; 1848-9, J. D. Boutan; 1850, James McBride; 1851-2, Benjamin Redford; 1853-4, Edward K. Fanning; 1855-7, John F. Booth; 1858-9, William Wake; 1859-60, Ezra K. Miner; 1861-3, Robert Roberts; 1864-6, H. C. Glover; 1867-8, Wm. H. Russell; 1869-70, Lorenzo D. Nickerson (second time); 1871-2, Nicholas Orchard; 1873-5, Samuel A. Seaman; 1876-8, Alexander McAlister; 1879-81, Henry C. Glover (second time); 1882-3, Wm. H. Russell (second time).

**Coney Island Chapel.**—In the year 1868 a Sunday-school was started upon Coney Island, the first sessions being held in the basement of the Wyekoff hotel. The need of a more suitable place for holding their services soon became apparent; and a chapel was suggested, where both Sunday-school and preaching-services could be held. The idea was brought to the notice of Thomas Bell, Esq., of Parkville, a kind-hearted and liberal man, who at once seconded the suggestion; and, to make the enterprise an immediate success, offered to advance the money to begin operations without delay. Accordingly, Messrs. Wm. H. Stillwell, John S. Ryder, and Edmund Williams, were constituted a building-committee, and immediately set to work. Oscar D. Way received the contract for building the new chapel, at a cost of \$850; the bell, fencing, painting, etc., bringing the sum total up to \$1,250. Of this sum \$600 was raised among the people, and \$650 advanced by Mr. Bell. After a trial of six or seven years the enterprise was, for a time, abandoned, and the chapel sold to District No. 1 for a day-school. After a few years of suspended animation the Sunday-school has again revived, and now is prospering under the efficient superintendence of Mr. Peck. A larger and more commodious chapel is in process of erection in a much pleasanter part of the island, and the future of the



present movement seems brighter than ever before. In 1868 Mr. Bell was also instrumental in having another church built in the western part of the town, near Unionville, for the colored population, called *The African Zion M. E. Church*.

**Catholic Churches.**—About 1869 a Catholic church was erected at Sheepshead Bay. It is a frame edifice, and, externally, inviting in appearance. Father James McKiverton is the officiating priest. In 1880 another handsome Catholic church was erected at Coney Island. Both of these churches are well attended by the Catholic element of the community.

Thus we have, in all, seven churches in the town of Gravesend.

**Cemeteries.**—The oldest in Gravesend is the old town burying-ground, dating back very nearly, if not quite, to the early settlement of the town. It is situated nearly in the center of the south-west town square, and is for public use, being used mostly by the old inhabitants, whose families have for many years been buried there. Eventually it will, probably, cease to be used for burial-purposes; since many families now own lots in Greenwood, and the number is constantly increasing.

The earliest record we find, relating to this cemetery, is the recorded will of John Tilton, one of the early and prominent settlers of Gravesend, and for many years town-clerk. This will is dated Jan. 15, 1687, wherein he devises land in Gravesend for a burying-ground, "for all persons in ye everlasting truth of ye gospel as occasion serves, forever to have and to hold, and to make use of to bury their dead there."

This land is known to cover a part of the present burial-ground, as no other has been used for this purpose since the first settlement of the town. It is also probable that this land of John Tilton's was adjoining, and intended to enlarge, the original burying-ground.

Some of the slabs marking the resting place of the quiet sleepers are very old. One rough stone bears, as near as we can read it, the date of 1676. Many of the old inscriptions are in Dutch. For example: "Hier Legt her Lichamran Ann Voorhes Vrou Barrent Voorhes, D. 1760." Some stones are also distinguished with a stanza of poetry, which speaks the usual hope for the dead, and warning to the living, which are common to the elegiac poetry of the present day. For example:

"Heere liyesthe Body of Benjamin Steimeist. Born Oct. 13, 1702. Departed this life April 12, 1762.

"His flesh in hope  
Rests in the dust;  
His soul departing hence, we trust  
Is praising God among the Just."

There is to be seen here, also, a common field-stone, hardly appearing above the ground, which Hon. Tunis G. Bergen thinks may probably mark the grave of Lady Moody.

Another burial-place in the north part of the town

was incorporated Sept. 7, 1850, under the name of *Washington Cemetery*. It contains 100 acres, or more than 10,000 lots, of 400 square feet each. It was founded by James Arlington Bennett, LL. D., to whom the land then belonged. It has become now almost exclusively a Jewish burying-ground. It is governed by a board of trustees, composed of six members, two of whom are elected annually. Henry D. Bennett, son of the founder, is the superintendent. Its situation is beautiful, fronting both upon Gravesend avenue on the west, and Ocean parkway on the east.

**Libraries.**—In addition to the Sunday-school libraries, which consist of a thousand or twelve hundred volumes, every school-district has a library of from two hundred to four hundred volumes, open to all residents of the districts, and replenished from year to year by money appropriated by the State.

In this connection it will be a matter of interest to look over the list of books contained in the library of Sir *Henry Moody*, while he was a resident of Gravesend. This library shows him to have been a man of extensive education for the time in which he lived. We give below the catalogue as we find it, in *Documentary History*, Vol. IV.

"A latyn Bible, in folio.

A written book in folio containing private matters of State.

A writteneth book in folio containing private matters of the King.

Seventeen several books of devinite matters.

A dictionarius Latin and English.

Sixteen several latin & Italian bookx of divers matters.

A book in folio containing the voage of Ferdinand Mendoza.

A book in folio Kolleth Sylva Sylvarum.

A book in quarto collth bartas' six days worck of the lord and translatt in English by Joshua Sylvester.

A book in quarto Kalleth the summe and substans of the Conference which it pleased his Excellent Majsti to have with the lords bishops &c. at Hampton Court contracteth by William Barlow.

A book in quarto Kalleth Ecclesiastica Interpretatio, or the Expositions upon the doubtful passages of the Seven Epistles callet Catholique and the Revelation collecteth by John Mayer.

Eleven several bookx more of divers substants.

The verification of his fathers Knights order given by King James.

Anno 1661."

**Lodges.**—A lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows was organized February 2d, 1859. The meetings are held weekly. The present officers as follows: *Noble G.*, Abram E. Stillwell; *Vice G.*, G. H. Wickham; *Rec. Sec.*, Dr. R. L. Van Kleek; *Permanent Sec.*, Washington Willis; *Past Grand*, Edmund Williams.

**Villages.**—*Sheepshead Bay.* One of the most thriving villages on Long Island is Sheepshead Bay, situated in the south-east part of the town of Gravesend.

There are those now living who well remember when there was but one house, and that a small, inferior one, on any part of what is now Sheepshead Bay.



The quiet waters of the inlet offered a secure anchorage for the small fishing-craft so common along the shore of Long Island; and, consequently, the fishermen gradually congregated here in the generation past, built their humble homes and enjoyed a peaceful life, as they followed their profitable but dangerous occupation. The population increased but slowly at first, and for many years the village consisted of only a small cluster of houses.

Some fifty years ago, however, some of the old residents of Brooklyn and New York discovered that here was just the place to spend a hot summer-day, both for pleasure or for health; or to satisfy a craving appetite with a clam-chowder, or a regular fish-dinner. But, for all this, it continued for years its undisturbed slumber.

About 40 or 45 years ago a hotel was built, known as Tappan's hotel, justly celebrated ever since for its excellent accommodations and courteous treatment of guests. It has always been a favorite resort of those who sought the "abundance of the sea," every variety of which they could find here upon shortest notice. A few years later Linderman's Hotel was built, and soon found also a host of enthusiastic friends and visitors. The Washington House, formerly owned and kept by Mr. Hendrickson, is also among the oldest and best known. Another hotel, whose claim of celebrity should not be overlooked, stood formerly in the middle of what is now Ocean avenue; and was kept by the genial and hospitable host, well-known of late years in city and country by the familiar name of "Pop Fagan." This house was burned; and, in 1875, another, known as Delano's hotel, took its place. In 1862 Mrs. McMahon built a fine hotel, which was greatly enlarged and beautified in 1882. In 1868 Osborn's hotel was erected; and, in 1882, the Hotel Jerome, perhaps the finest hotel at the Bay. These hotels are now filled with summer-boarders, who find a most excellent tonic in the cooling sea-breeze, combined with the finest sea-bathing, boating and fishing, anywhere to be found.

Like other parts of the town, the Bay has grown wonderfully in popular favor within the last ten years. To those who visit the Bay but seldom, the changes noticeable, even in a short time, are perfectly surprising. Houses are building, new streets are opening, and the march of general improvements constantly advancing. The first marked advance of Sheepshead Bay in popularity, and increase of valuation, dates from the year 1877, when a farmer by the name of Emmer, owning a farm of some 50 acres near the Bay, died; and his widow had the farm surveyed, divided into building-lots, and sold by public auction. The following year a neighboring farm, owned by Daniel D. Stillwell, was also sold in the same manner. Building immediately began upon these lots, and now the whole hundred acres or more are nearly covered with dwelling-houses; and, since then, the few lots left unimproved have quadrupled in value.

Perhaps the finest and most fashionable part of Sheepshead Bay is what is called "Lincoln Beach;" formerly low marshy ground, which, a few years ago, could not find a purchaser at \$100 an acre. It lies a little to the east of the village, and along the shore of the bay; having before it the beautiful Manhattan Beach, and, on the left, an uninterrupted ocean-view. The pioneer in building up and beautifying Lincoln Beach was Alanson Treadwell, Esq., the head of the celebrated clothing-house of Treadwell, Jarman & Slote, corner of Broadway and Chambers street, N. Y. His fondness for fishing and boating had frequently led him, during former summer-seasons, to visit Sheepshead Bay, where he could indulge, without limit, his favorite sport. With prophetic instinct he saw the future value of this unimproved low-ground as a place for summer-residences, provided a suitable outlay of money and labor should first be made. Consequently, in 1877, Mr. Treadwell purchased two building-lots for \$350 apiece, and began the work of filling in with soil to make a solid foundation for a summer-cottage. Never before had man dared to dispute with the ocean-tides the question of title to this property. Hence, there was many a shrug of the shoulders and shake of the head among the neighbors when they saw this rash and expensive work undertaken. It was, however, accomplished in due time, in spite of every obstacle, and a neat and very pleasant cottage erected upon one of the lots in the spring of 1878. This was the starting-point of an enterprise which has grown beyond all expectations. Other lots were soon bought by wealthy men, and handsome buildings erected, until now there are, lining the shore-front, ten or twelve beautiful cottages, costing from five to seven thousand dollars; and it has become the finest part of Sheepshead Bay.

To show the almost fabulous increase in value of this once nearly worthless marsh, we may cite the fact that one of the lots originally bought by Mr. Treadwell, he sold to his partner, for the purchase-price, \$350. This gentleman, after keeping the property four years, not wishing himself to build upon it, sold it, unimproved as he found it, for over \$6,000.

In 1880-1, the brothers, J. B. and Robert Voorhees, owners of two beautiful farms adjoining the village, began to sell lots for building-purposes, and also to erect fine houses themselves, which have found ready lease. This, also, has greatly added to the improvement of the place. There are now, probably, 200 or 250 houses where, a little more than a generation ago, there was but one. Mrs. Elizabeth Clute, a wealthy lady from New York, coming to the Bay for summer recreation, found it so delightful and healthful a place to live, that she has made it her permanent residence since 1877. She has done much for the place in building handsome houses, and otherwise creating much enthusiasm in village improvements. Her own residence, Manhattan Villa, is one of the finest in town.



John Y. McKane, our efficient and hard-working supervisor, is one of our most enterprising business-men, and resides here. Aside from his official duties, he has in his employ, as a builder, some 100 to 150 men, and is in constant demand, both in-and out of town.

We would also mention the Lundy Bros., Corson Bros., John Miller, Mr. Teets, and many others, as enterprising business-men.

The village is connected, by foot-bridge, with Manhattan Beach; and contains a church, post-office, four stores, a meat-market, and also many hotels and excellent boarding-houses, where the finest fresh fish, clams, oysters, and every desirable kind of sea-food can be had in abundance. Two steam-railroads afford excellent communication with Coney Island, and also with New York and Brooklyn.

And thus our growth continues; and, we venture to say, that no village in Kings county can show a better record of material prosperity for the past few years, or brighter prospects of the future. With the great bridge uniting the two largest cities of America, now thrown open to the public; and the problem of rapid transit about to be solved, it is not rash to prophesy, for this part of Long Island, at no distant day, a future which will far eclipse the wildest dreams of its most enthusiastic inhabitant.

**Unionville.**—This village is built, partly, as we have before seen, on the site of the old bowery of the first patentee, Antony Jansen. There are some fifty houses along the shore of Gravesend Bay, overlooking Coney Island Point, and the beginning of "The Narrows."

There are several hotels, among the finest of which, for situation and royal hospitality, is the hotel of Capt. James Stillwell. Near by is also the ruin of the first tide grist-mill ever built in town, some 230 years ago. There is also a church, several stores, and a thriving lumber-yard, owned and run by A. & T. M. Hageman.

The fishing and boating here are most excellent, and it is a favorite resort for summer-boarders, who desire the full benefit of the sea-shore, combined with the quiet and rest of country-life.

*Gunther's Steam Railroad* furnishes quick and comfortable communication with the city. We predict for Unionville a future enlargement and importance, of which she need not be ashamed.

**General History.**—Until within the past ten years there has been very little variation in the history of the town. The population has slowly increased, and property has advanced in value little by little. The people have pursued the even tenor of their ways, and lived to a good old age.

The record of deeds and transfers of property has been made in the Register's office in Brooklyn since about 1707; and, hence, the town-records have been taken up generally with the reports of town-officers elected, and resolutions passed, which, for the most part, relate to Coney Island.

**Supervisors.**—The first recorded election of Supervisor took place in 1754, Samuel Gerritsen being the successful candidate. Since then the following gentlemen, among others, have filled the office with honor and ability, some of them for nearly or quite 20 years. John Terhune; Nicholas Stillwell; Samuel G. Stryker; B. I. Ryder; William Bennett; Jaques J. Stillwell; and John Y. McKane, at the present time President *pro tem.* of the Board of Kings county, an honor worthily bestowed. Others also have faithfully served, whose names are not now at hand.

**Town-Clerks.**—In the early history of the colony this office was the most important in the town. John Tilton was the first "clerk;" serving the town in this capacity for about twenty years. The names of Edward Brouse and Symon Lane also appear as filling, for a short time, this office. Will Goulding was also town-clerk for some twenty-two years; and John Emans for thirteen. Among many others we note the names of Samuel Hubbard; Samuel Gerritsen; and, more recently, Judge Nicholas Stillwell; Jacobus Lake, and the present clerk, John L. Voorhees. Mr. Stillwell held the office, without doubt, longer than any other man. For thirty-five years he carefully kept the town-records, in a clear, legible hand, and to-day is probably better versed in town affairs than any man living. He served from 1835-70. He was also, for three years, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas, until this court was abolished; and, for six or seven years, Associate-Justiee of the Kings county Court of Sessions.

Within the past ten years the town has advanced more in material prosperity than in the whole century preceding the last decade.

The popularity of Coney Island, and the millions expended there in fine hotels and other improvements, have brought the town at once into notoriety. Why this vast mine of wealth remained so long undeveloped is a mystery. The town received some benefit from Coney Island at least seventy-five years ago.

The first record we find of the appointment of commissioners of common lands is dated 1811, when, at a public town-meeting, it was resolved, that it would promote the interests of the town to lease Coney Island. According to this resolution, Nicholas Stillwell, Van Brunt Magaw and John Terhune were chosen commissioners for granting leases "upon such conditions and terms of years, as to them should seem fit, and the most to promote the interest of said town."

This speaks well for the honesty and good judgment of the first commissioners, and the confidence the town reposed in them.

**Magistrates' Pew in Church.**—In the early part of this century the town-justices, being the chief dignitaries, were honored, and, at the same time, encouraged, to attend divine-service on the Sabbath, by having a pew set apart for their special use. But in 1813, at a public town-meeting, it was "Resolved, to sell the



pew in church in said town, commonly called the justices' bench, by public auction." Stephen Stryker was declared the successful bidder.

**Town-Hall.**—Among public buildings we would not forget to mention the *town-hall*, built in 1873. In the second story is a large public hall, with stage, ante-rooms, &c. The first floor contains a court-room and room for public town business, and several smaller side-rooms for the use of town-officers; and in the basement are four cells for the confinement of criminals, which (in summer time) are generally well patronized.

**Water Supply.**—In January, 1880, an application was filed before the Town Water Board to form a "Water Works Co.," for the purpose of supplying the town with pure, fresh water. The board granted the franchise in May of the same year. The following persons form the company: C. W. Schofield; S. Richardson; Benj. Richardson; Benj. S. Stephens; J. A. Brainard; William Bennett and Harmanus B. Hubbard. The company have erected a large brick engine-house; a large iron water-tank, 75 feet high by 15 or 20 feet in diameter, and have sunk several fine wells on their property, near the Brighton Beach railroad. They have run a main to Sheepshead Bay and one to Coney Island; and it is hoped will soon, according to their promise, run another to the village of Gravesend.

The town, for the last few years, has had a hard, expensive and constant struggle to save any of her valuable common-lands from the hands of grasping corporations, which have already seized much of it for railroad purposes. What the future will develop in this direction yet remains to be seen.

One thing, however, is evident,—that the quiet slumber which this good old town has enjoyed for more than two hundred years, has at length been forcibly disturbed and broken up; and, with all her natural advantages, and the impetus she has already gained in the way of progress, we cannot help predicting for Gravesend a magnificent future.

**Race-Courses.**—Horse-racing on Long Island is said to have been first introduced by Gov. Nicoll, in 1665. The first course was at Hempstead Plains, and a piece of plate was the stake. The object, as set forth by the Governor, was to improve the stock, and encourage the breeding of superior animals. The sport was countenanced and continued by Gov. Lovelace, who, in 1669, authorized the inspectors of Hempstead to receive subscriptions for a sweepstakes. Gravesend seems to be specially favored (?) in this respect, there being no less than four race-courses in the town. The first one was the *Prospect Park Fair Grounds Association*, incorporated 1868, containing about 60 acres. A mile-track was made, and a large club house built near Gravesend avenue, which was afterwards moved to Ocean Parkway, when this magnificent avenue was opened through their ground.

The property has now come into the hands of the following gentlemen: George Powers; Samuel Payson; E. O. Read and Henry Dodge.

The club-house is in charge of the celebrated caterer, Hiram W. Howe.

About 1874, a half-mile track was built near Parkville, containing some 40 acres. The hotel was first erected on Coney Island avenue, at that time the principal thoroughfare to Coney Island. When the Ocean Parkway was opened it was removed to the latter avenue; and, after being to some extent remodelled, it now makes a fine appearance. After a few years of prosperity it ceased to be profitable as a race-course, and was consequently used for other sporting purposes. The property belongs to Ex-Mayor W. R. Grace of New York. The management of the concern has this year (1883) passed into the hands of the *New York and Brooklyn Driving Club*. William McMahon has charge of the hotel.

**Coney Island Jockey Club.**—In 1880, the Coney Island Jockey Club bought 100 acres of land, in what was commonly known as the "Neck Woods," at a cost of \$110,000. Subsequently they added about twenty acres more, at an expense of \$25,000, making the total cost of purchase about \$135,000. At great expense, all the trees not needed for shade or ornament were taken out by the roots, and the grounds were graded, seeded, and otherwise greatly beautified. A grand-stand was built, with solid, brick foundation, upon which rests a well-proportioned and highly ornate edifice. It has been handsomely painted; and, with the sloping, grassy lawn in front, presents altogether an attractive appearance. Its cost was nearly \$50,000. Everything about their vast grounds is kept in perfect order.

Spring and fall meetings, of ten days each, are held, and the most celebrated race-horses in the country are then put upon exhibition. This is the most fashionable resort of the kind in the vicinity of New York. Thousands of people are brought by railroads and carriages every day of the races, and it is said that as much as \$30,000 have been taken, as gate-money alone, during a single meeting. Their beautiful and extensive grounds are freely thrown open to the public, except during the racing-season, and a drive through them well repays the trouble.

It is a stock-company, and the present officers are: Leonard W. Jerome, President; Gen. Butterfield, Treasurer; J. G. K. Lawrence, Secretary.

The fourth course, that of the *Brighton Beach Fair Ground*, will be mentioned more particularly, in connection with Coney Island.

#### ADDENDA.

On pages 162 and 189, reference is made to a confirmatory deed given, in 1654, to the people of Gravesend, by the former Indian proprietors of Coney Island.

The following is the deed in question:



GRAVESEND, May the seventh, 1654. Certain Indians, viz., Mattenoh, Sachemacko [Sachem] of Niocco [Nyack] being demanded against a certain parcel of land, viz., a neck of land from Antonie Johnson's house southward and on Island called Conye Island, to whom it did belong unto, they did all declare that it was to their knowledge the right and true proper land of one Guttaquoh, and called by them Narrioch, that is to say, the Island; and the neck of land is called by them Manahanning, and in testimony of the premises have hereunto set their hands.

*Sig: Matt Vanoh*  
*Sig: Guttaquoh*

The above sd quantitie of land being within the bounds and limits of the land granted by patent to certain patentees and inhabitants of Gravesend, by the late Gov. Kieft, the above said Guttaquoh doth, hereby, acknowledge and declare to have sold all his right, interest and claims to the above said quantities of land, called Narrioch and Manahanning, unto the honourable the lords Bewint Hebbers of the West India Company of the Chamber of Amsterdan, for the use, right and propertie of the above said patentees and inhabitants of Gravesend, as having received fifteen fathoms of sewan, two gunns, three pounds of powder, for, and in, consideration of the sail land, of the said patentees and inhabitants and doe hereby by virtue hereof assigne, sell and make over all my right, title and interest unto the said land unto them, their heirs, executors, administrators and assigns to enjoy as their own proper land, together with all the meadow land and marsh land thereunto appertaining. In confirmation whereof I have hereunto set my hand the seventh of May 1654.

*Guttaquoh*

Subscribed and acknowledged in the presence of us

GEO. L. RIGHT. A. RANDELL.  
JNO. WILLSON. JUET, *Interpreter.*

The following deeds recorded in the office of the Secretary of State, at Albany, N. Y., also possess interest as touching materially on early Gravesend history.

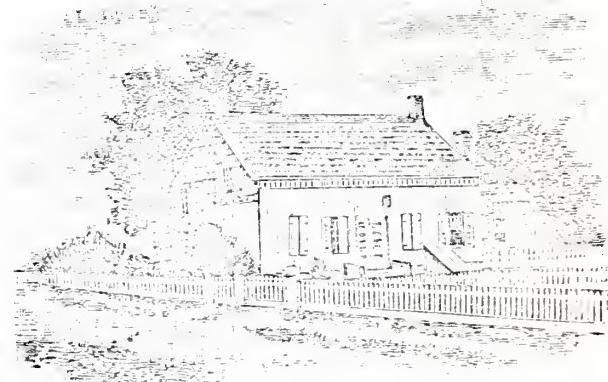
Papomora, Chief of ye Indians, To James Hubbard, John Bowne, John Tilton, Jr., Richard Stout, William Goulding and Samuel Spicer.	Jan. 25, 1664. Liber 3, page 1.
Taplawappammund, Mattamahicknick, and Yaupoachannund, Kackenham, also Mattanoh, Norchon and Qurrmeck, To John Tilton, Samuel Spicer, William Goulding, Richard Gibbons, James Grover and Richard Stout.	
Manavendo, Emmerdesolsee, Pap-pomera, Checawsenin, Shanhemun, Cramanscun, Winegermeca, Macca,	April 7, 1665. Liber 3, page 3.
To James Grover, John Bowne, Richard Stout, Tohn Tilton, Richard Gibbons, William Goulding, Samuel Spicer, and the rest of the company.	
	Dated June 5, 1665. Liber 3, page 5.

**Correction of Error.**—It may be well here to correct a ridiculous *misprint* made in Thomson's *History of Long Island*, ii., 76, which reflects somewhat upon the fair fame of Gravesend. It occurs in this quotation; on the 14th of April, 1649, John Furman agreed with the town to keep their calves for three weeks for sixty guilders, "to be paid in money, tobacco, or corn, and some *bitters*, if desired." In the original manuscript the word "bitters" is found to be *butter*!

**Ancient Homesteads.**—But few of these remain, the most notable being the following:

**THE STILLWELL HOUSE.**—This house was formerly in possession of the Van Sicklen family. Ferdinandes Van Sicklen was the first owner of the property, to whom we can distinctly trace it; although it may have been in the family for several generations before.

After the death of Ferdinandes, who was a man of considerable note in the town, and died some time in the latter part of the last century, the property, including the house (then new), was inherited by his son Cornelius, the grandfather of Henry and Abram Van Sicklen, now large property owners on Coney Island. Cornelius sold it to one Richard Stillwell, from which time the Stillwell interest in the property begins. It is said of Cornelius Van Sicklen that, after he sold the property, he went to Pleasant Valley, Dutchess county



THE STILLWELL HOUSE.

and bought a farm. Soon his wife died, and he returned to Gravesend. Happening one day to meet a worthy maiden, Katrina Stillwell, while she was in the act of milking the cow, being struck with her modest beauty, and perhaps also with her worth as a frugal *helpmeet* for a farmer, he at once proposed marriage to her on the spot; and after one night for careful deliberation, he was accepted. From this marriage sprang the present Van Sicklen family, which is the third generation.

Richard Stillwell, whom we left in possession of the property, occupied the old house till his death, when it was conveyed to his son Daniel, whose heirs still hold it. Mr. Stillwell lived in the old house for some years, when he built a fine residence in striking contrast to the low-roofed, side-shingled house of his fathers;



After this the old house was occupied by his farmer, and continues so to be used to this day. It is a venerable structure, probably over a century old, and is still in a fair state of preservation.

**THE STRYKER HOUSE.**—This is another of the old landmarks of Gravesend. We can only trace it back three generations, to Cornelius Stryker, who, at his death, left it to his son Derick.

After his death, it continued to be the family residence for over 30 years. In 1861, when the youngest child, Cornelius D. Stryker, became of age, the farm was divided, and the widow bought the interest of the other heirs in the old house.

Some ten or fifteen years later, she sold the house to her son-in-law, Mr. David Jones, the present owner. It begins to show plainly the marks of age. Its history



THE STRYKER HOUSE.

must reach back nearly, if not fully, a hundred years. Like the Stillwell House, it is built after the Dutch fashion of the early times; it is one story, with extending eaves on either side which form a kind of piazza, and with the living, sleeping and working rooms mostly on the ground floor.

What is remarkable about this house is that the roof has never been renewed, and the shingles, though very much dilapidated and open to the weather, are still the same that were laid when the house was first built; probably long before the oldest person in town was born. An outlay of a few hundred dollars would make it good for many years to come.

**THE JOHNSON HOUSE.**—This house was built by Barrent Johnson, from whom it descended, through his son, to the late Barrent Johnson, for many years Associate-Judge of the Court of Sessions, whose heirs now hold it. This house, though not so old as the others mentioned, is far older in appearance and more dilapidated, and shows the sad neglect of years. It is fast passing into an uninhabitable condition.

To look at these old houses, one would think they were built to last, not for years, but centuries.

The large, heavy timbers then used, which were cut

a year before needed, and well seasoned, would now be considered almost too cumbersome for a five-story factory.

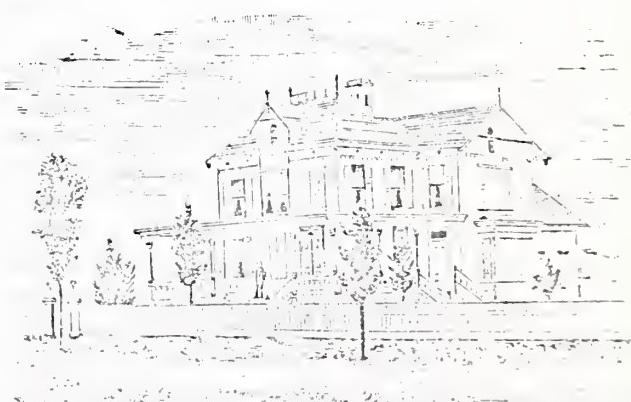


THE JOHNSON HOUSE.

This old house is especially noteworthy, because it stands, on what will be seen by the old map, to have been originally the "Bowery of ye Lady Moody," and is no doubt very near the site of her early residence. It is situated, like the other two mentioned, near the center of the village.

It cannot fail to awaken in the mind of one who knows anything of its history, grateful thoughts of the noble woman who took so grand and memorable a part in the early settlement, defence and prosperity of the town.

**COTTAGE OF REV. A. P. STOCKWELL.**—This cottage is situated a little distance from the village, and near the Ocean parkway, which connects Prospect Park with the ocean. It was built by Rev. A. P. Stockwell, pastor of the Reformed Church at Gravesend, in 1852, for his private residence. Mr. Dixon of Brooklyn was the



THE RESIDENCE OF REV. A. P. STOCKWELL.

architect, and Mr. John Y. McKane, of Gravesend, the builder.

It has been greatly admired for its architectural beauty, and the convenience of its internal arrangement. It also specially shows the contrast between the present style and arrangement of dwellings, and that of a hundred years ago, and the advance which has in these years been made.



## HISTORY OF CONEY ISLAND.

By

  
Dr. J. K. Stillwell  
Esq.

**TOPOGRAPHY.** About 7 miles southerly from New York city, at the extreme entrance to its harbor, facing the Atlantic Ocean, and separated from Long Island by a narrow creek, is an island about 5 miles long, varying in width from a few hundred feet to three-fourths of a mile, which, within the last few years, has become celebrated as *the* watering-place of New York and Brooklyn—**CONEY ISLAND**. It comprises about 80 acres of arable land; its southerly border is an ocean-washed beach of fine white sand, and its northerly border, along the creek, which divides it from the mainland, is mainly salt-marsh or meadow. The present Coney Island has been formed by the gradual aggregation, in times past, of several separate tracts; and, until the beginning of the present century, the western portion of the present island was the only part known by that name. Its Indian name was Narrioch, and it extended from Norton's Point easterly, to near the site of Rich. Ravenhall's establishment; and, when first discovered, was much broader north by south than now, (see the *Narrative of the Labadists*, 1679-80, and THOMPSON'S *History of Long Island*). This Narrioch, the original Coney Island, was bounded east by an inlet connecting the bay and ocean, and separating it from Coney Hook, a peninsula of the mainland extending south to the ocean. A ditch was dug through the salt-marsh of Coney Hook, from Brown's creek east to Hubbard's creek, making Coney Hook an island; thenceforth known as Pine Island, from its being rather heavily timbered with pine, oak and cedar. Eastward from, and adjoining Pine Island, was Pine Island Inlet, separating Pine Island and Guisbert's Island. Paul Bauer's West Brighton Hotel occupies part of the site of this inlet, which was an almost direct southerly continuation of Hubbard's creek. Next easterly to this inlet was Guisbert Island, the largest of all the divisions of Coney Island, and which contained all the arable land; being, therefore, often called in the Gravesend records “the island.” In front, and on the southerly side of Guisbert's Island, was the “Great Pond,” a considerable sheet of water, discharging into the ocean at its westerly end, nearly in front of Bader's Hotel at the Ocean Parkway; and, at the other end, opening into Sheepshead Bay, east of “Windmill Hill,” on Manhattan Beach. This pond and these inlets were the main approaches into Sheepshead Bay from the ocean. The outer shore

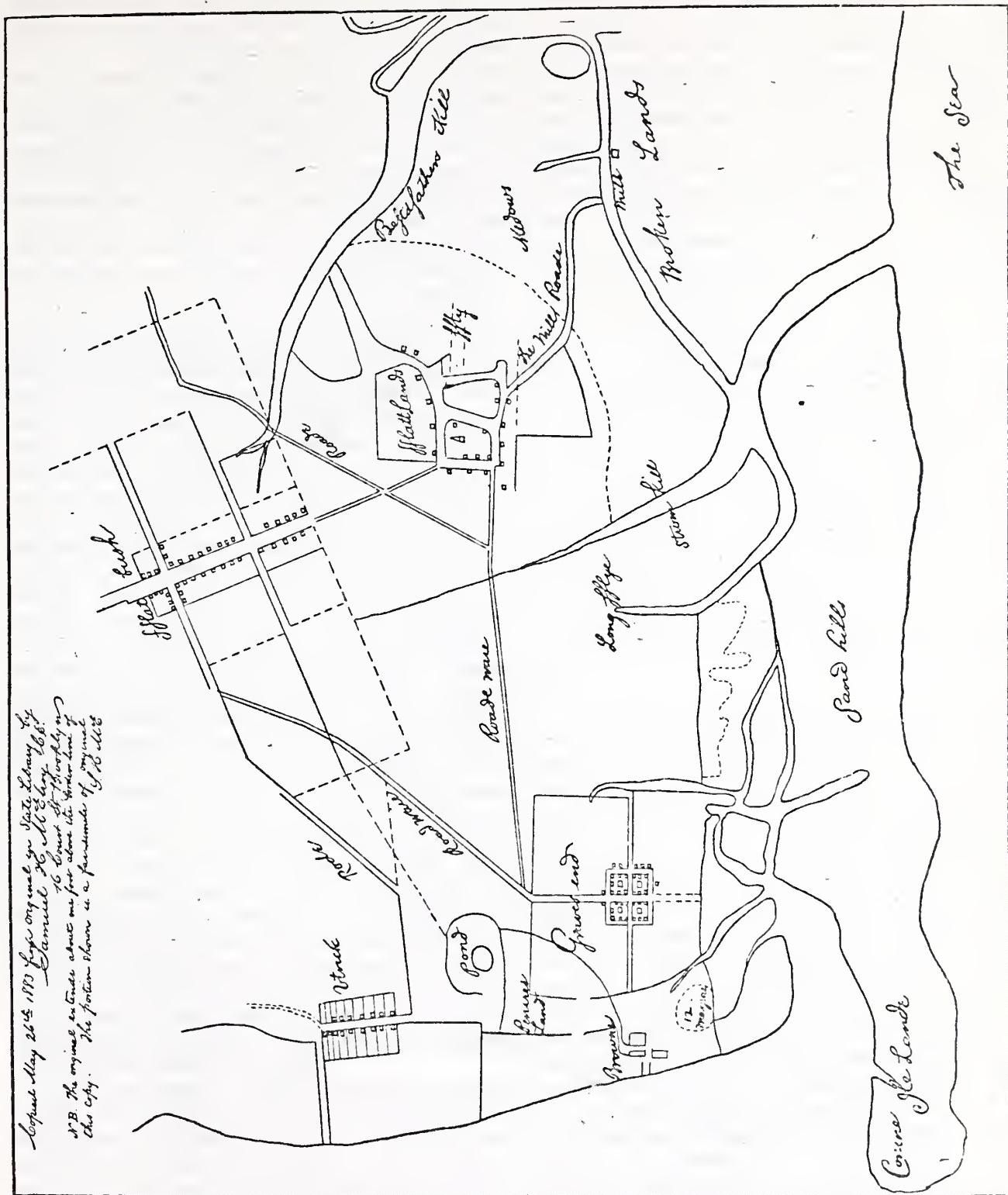
of this pond was a low, flat sand-bar, skirting the entire front of Guisbert's Island, on the ocean. Easterly of this bar and Guisbert's Island, was another inlet, known as Plumb Beach Inlet, and separating these portions of Coney Island from Pelican Beach, then a part of Barren Island. By the filling up of Plumb Beach Inlet, and the breaking through the beach of another inlet much further east, Pelican Beach has become a part of Coney Island.

**Discovery.** Coney Island was first visited by Verrazzano, in his discovery of this region, in 1527 and 1529. It would seem, from De Laet's, and also from Juet's narratives of the voyage and discovery of Henry Hudson, in 1609, that this was one of the places at which they landed and had interview with the savages.

**Settlement.** In 1643 Gravesend was settled by Lady Moody and friends; but, before the date of the second or confirmatory patent granted them in 1645, several persons took up farms within what became afterwards the town-boundaries, and for which they held individual patents. In May, 1643, Antonie Jansen Van Salee took a patent for land, of which the larger portion was at the extreme westerly part of the town (near Unionville), and the balance was a strip running southerly therefrom, which the English settlers also claimed. They had also undertaken to extinguish the Indian title to the land granted the town, by direct purchases from the natives. The earliest of these, November 1st, 1642 had been that of Narrioch (the original Coney Island), from Cippehake, sachem of the Canarsies. But the Nyack Indians also claimed ownership of this; and Francis de Bruyne, who had succeeded to the ownership of the Jansen Van Salee farm, insisted upon his right to the strip, which lay between its two portions. Anxious to fortify their claim to this, as well as to Narrioch, which they had come to look upon as their own (though Kieft's patent only gave them the privilege of pasturing on it), they obtained from the Nyacks, May 7th, 1654 (for 15 fathoms of seawant, 2 guns, 3 lbs. of powder), a conveyance of Coney Island, and the disputed neck of land; which latter was an inheritance of litigation to the town of Gravesend, some of the suits arising from it being yet pending in the courts. Guisbert Op Dyck, the original patentee of Coney Island, being Commissioner of Provisions for the colony of North America, neglected to occupy his patent; but,



1748537



FAC-SIMILIE COPY OF A PORTION OF "A PLOTTE OFF YE SITUATION OF YE TOWNS AND PLACES ON YE WEST END OF  
LONG ISLAND TO HEMPSTEAD BOUNDS, LAID DOWNE BY ME, HUBBARDE, JULY 3d, 1666.  
Scale,  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches to the mile.

This map is alluded to by Dr. STRONG in his *History of Flatbush*, page 23; and it is also illustrative of the disputes between De Bruyn (owner of the Jansen Van Salee patent) and the Town of Gravesend. See pages 158 and 159.



afterwards, being thrown out of public employment, began to think how he could realize upon it. In August, 1661, he presented to the Director and Council a petition setting forth that the people of Gravesend were in the constant use of "a certain little island, situate between the tide-creek and Coney Island, and now called Guisbert's Island," and were very anxious to purchase it for pasturage of their cattle, and praying that he might be allowed to dispose of it to that town. But, as the Council took no notice of his petition, and the Gravesend people apparently were less anxious than he represented, to purchase land of which they were already virtually in possession, Op Dyck finally, October 20, 1661, having failed to sell to them part of the ground claimed in his patent, sold the whole of it to Dick De Wolf, a merchant of New Amsterdam, who had obtained from the Amsterdam Chamber of the W. I. Company, the exclusive privilege of making salt in the Nieuw Netherlands. De Wolf promptly established his salt-works on the island, and his agents ordered the Gravesend people to cease pasturing their cattle, or making hay thereon. This roused the ire of the Gravesend settlers, who "laid waste his garden, tore down the surrounding palisades and burned them completely, threatening to throw the foreman of the work, who reproved them, on the top of the burning pile." The matter, being brought before the Director and Council, was by them decided favorably to the English; but, on reference to the Council of the W. I. Company, at Holland, that body (jealous of English influences, as is evident from their instructions to Governor Stuyvesant) called for all the papers in the case, desiring meanwhile that a guard of "two or three soldiers" should be sent to take possession of De Wolf's house, etc., in the name of the Company, and to "prevent further robberies and outrage." Stuyvesant, however, who was no friend to Guisbert Op Dyck, the original patentee, and who had good reason to keep on the best of terms with the Gravesend people, manifested no especial haste to comply with the orders of his superiors. For, in January, 1664, the directors of the W. I. Company again wrote to him complaining of his delay; which, however, continued until the transfer of the Nieuw Netherlands to the English in September of that year, disposed finally of the fortunes of the first manufacturing enterprise ever established within the limits of the present King's county.

By the new charter which the English Governor Nicolls granted Gravesend in 1668, Coney Island (Narrioch) was not embraced within the town-limits; and this, with similar defects relating to the town's disputes with De Bruyne, was sought to be rectified in a patent obtained by the town, in 1671, from Governor Lovelace. Having thus considerably enlarged their bounds and perfected their title, the Gravesend people (1670) entertained the project of dividing Guisbert's Island; which was not done, however, until October, 1677, when, by Samuel Speer, Samuel Holmes and Ralph Cardall,

appointed a committee for the purpose, it was divided into thirty-nine parts or shares, of about two acres each. The inhabitants then agreed "that the said island shall be fenced and planted only with Indian-corn, tobacco or any summer grain, and not else; that the cattle may have the benefit of feeding until the beginning of the third month, or until the meadows are through, and then in the latter part of the year, when tobacco and Indian corn are housed, and the said land is to be thrown open to commons, when the major part will use their land no longer, as being worn out." The lots and names of owners in this division were:—1, Thomas Tilton; 2, Samuel Holmes; 3, John Lake; 4, William Compton; 5, Samuel Speer; 6, James Hubbard; 7, John Tilton; 8, John Bowne; 9, John Griggs; 10, John Lake; 11, Barent Juriansen; 12, Obadiah Wilkins; 13, Samuel Holmes; 14, Ralph Cardell; 15, John Bowne; 16, Thomas Delavall; 17, John Tilton, Jr.; 18, John Cooke; 19, Nicholas Stillwell; 20, Peter Symson; 21, Richard Stillwell; 22, John Tilton, Jr.; 23, Thomas Delavall; 24, Samuel Speer; 25, Barent Juriansen; 26, John Griggs; 27, Samuel Speer; 28, Charles Bridges; 29, Thomas Delavall; 30, John Lake; 31, Ann Wilkins; 32, William Williamson; 33, John Emans; 34, Ralph Cardell; 35, John Poland; 36, John Applegate; 37, Samuel Holmes; 38, Samuel Speer; 39, William Goulding.

By the new conveyance from the Indians, in 1684, and the confirmatory charter obtained from Governor Dongan, 1685, Coney Island was fully secured to Gravesend.

The *Labadist travellers* have left us a clear description of Coney Island, as they saw it in 1679: "The outer shore of this [Long] Island has before it several small islands and broken lands, such as Coney Island (*t' Conijnen Eylandt*), a low sandy island of about three hours circuit, its westerly point forming with Sandy Hook, on the other side, the entrance from the sea. It is oblong in shape and is grown over with bushes. Nobody lives upon it, but it is used in winter for keeping cattle, horses, oxen, hogs and others, which are able to obtain there sufficient to eat the whole winter, and to shelter themselves from the cold in the thickets. This island is not so cold as Long Island, or the Manhattans or others, like some other islands on the coast, in consequence of their having more sea-breeze, and of the saltiness of the sea breaking upon the shoals, rocks and reefs, with which the coast is beset."

**Subsequent Divisions of the Island.**—Following the rule established in the original division of the Gravesend settlement, viz.: thirty-nine shares or portions (there were in the first division forty shares, one of which was for a school-house), the balance of the present island was, from time to time, divided among the Gravesend inhabitants, always in thirty-nine shares; viz.: as we have seen, in 1677, Guisbert's Island; 1761, meadow at east end of Guisbert's Island; Plumab Is-



land ; 1766, "Sedge Bank" (Manhattan Beach) ; 1766, the "middle division of the island" (present W. A Engeman, Brighton Beach and Race Track), etc. The two latest divisions were made in 1815 and 1821.

**The Town's Commonage Leases of Coney Island.**—By agreement of its inhabitants and freeholders in town-meeting assembled, the town had, from time to time, leased Pine and Coney Islands, in seven-year leases (reserving for the freeholders "the privilege of fishing, grazing, fowling, hawking, gunning, hunting, cutting off and carting off any sort of timber," etc.), to the following persons : 1702, John Griggs ; 1720, Richard Stillwell ; 1727, Thomas Stillwell ; 1731, Richard Stillwell ; 1733, Capt. John Cannon, mariner, of New York ; 1789, the islands were let in three divisions, to the highest bidders, viz., Abraham and John Emans, and John Van Cleef ; this arrangement continued *annually* (the lessees being Emans, Van Cleef, Jones and Voorhis) until 1803, when the town directed the Commissioners of Highways to "let, for one season, at public vendue, to the highest bidder, all the undivided mowing-meadows or commons" in the town, etc.; "the sand on Plumb Island and Pine Island beaches" to be let by contract, the rights of Gravesend people to sand being protected.

**Roads on Coney Island.**—A road to the island was made in 1734, from the record of which it appears that the inlet between Coney Island and Coney Hook (Pine Island) had, by this time, become so shoal that the road was laid right along the beach without regard to it, and yet the two islands are divided by it—thus fixing the time when the process of filling up this inlet was going on ; and that Coney Hook had become separated from the main land and had become an island. Thomas Stillwell, a very prominent citizen of Gravesend in that day, and who had become the owner of all the thirty-nine lots on Giusbert's Island (constituting all the arable land on Coney Island), conceived the idea that, by cutting a ditch from Hubbard's to Brown's creek he would secure an excellent pasture for his cattle, near his farm. At this time a considerable trade had arisen between New York and the residents on Jamaica Bay, whose boats went outside of Coney Island, in their trips to and from New York. Stillwell, by personal visitation of his Jamaica friends, convinced them that the opening of a ditch or canal through his property would give them an *inside* route to New York ; and finally, they all assembled, on a given day, and dug the canal—known to this day as "Jamaica Ditch." It was a *success*—giving the market-boats not only a shorter, but a much safer and easier way to the city.

By successive town-orders it was ordered (1735 and '49) that no one should mow sedge, or grass, upon Coney Island before the 1st September ; in 1752, that no wood or timber should be cut off ; and, in 1761, a division was made of the meadow on east end of Giusbert's Island. In 1763 another road was laid out along the

north side of middle division of Coney Island. About the year 1820, the project of a new and more direct road to Coney Island began to be agitated ; for, up to that time, the only route to Giusbert's or Johnson's Island was by fording the creek (if the tide happened to be low), and then westerly along the southerly side of Giusbert's Island. John Terhune, then Supervisor of Gravesend, proposed that the town should build what is now popularly known as "the shell road ;" but it was eventually done by private enterprise.

*The Gravesend and Coney Island Road and Bridge Company* was incorporated March 22, 1823, by legislative act, with a capital stock of 300 shares of \$20 each, and empowering John Terhune, Van Brunt Magaw, John S. Gerritson, and their associates, to open a road three rods wide through the meadows (between land at present of Janies A. Williamson, and land late of Stephen H. Stillwell, deceased,) and to construct a bridge over the creek. The enterprise, however, grew upon the hands of the projectors, who soon saw the necessity of providing a hotel for visitors to the Island. Additional capital-stock was authorized by act of legislature in 1826 ; five directors were authorized by an amendment act, in 1829, and the road and bridge were built, and a site procured from Court Van Sicklen, on which they erected the "Coney Island House," and leased the same to a Mr. Tooker for three years. This property, in 1827, was sold to John Terhune, who, the same year, sold a half to his brother Abraham, and it ultimately passed, with John's half, into the hands of Peter Lott.

**Piracy. The Tragedy of the Brig Vineyard.**—Coney Island is connected with a tragedy of the sea, well-nigh forgotten by even the older residents of the vicinity, but which was the cause of intense excitement at the time. On the 9th November, 1820, the brig Vineyard cleared from New Orleans for Philadelphia with a cargo of cotton, sugar and molasses, and \$54,000 in specie (all Mexican dollars), consigned to Stephen Girard, Esq., of the latter city. The officers and crew of the brig were William Thornby, Captain ; Mr. Roberts, Mate ; Charles Gibbs (alias Thos. D. Jeffers), Aaron Church, James Talbot, John Brownrigg, and Henry Atwell, seamen ; Robert Dawes (age 18 or 19), cabin-boy, and Wansley, a young Delaware negro, steward and cook. When the brig had been five days out at sea, and was off Cape Hatteras, the negro steward informed some of the others of the money on board ; and, with Gibbs, Church, Atwell and Dawes, planned to kill the captain and mate, and possess themselves of the specie. On the night of March 23d, between 12 and 1 o'clock, as the captain was on the quarter-deck, and the boy Dawes was steering, the negro Wansley came up on deck, and, obeying a pre-arranged call from Dawes to come and trim the binnacle-light, as he passed behind the captain felled him with a pump-brake, and killed him, by



repeated blows. Gibbs then coming up, he and Wansley flung the captain's body overboard. Roberts, the mate, who was below, came up the companion way to ascertain the cause of the commotion, and was attacked by Church and Atwell, who failed, however, (through nervousness) to accomplish their design upon him. He retreated to the cabin, where he was followed by Gibbs, who, not being able to find him in the dark, returned to the deck for the binnacle-lamp, with which he re-entered the cabin, accompanied by Church, Atwell, and the boy Dawes; and Roberts, being speedily overcome by their blows, was dragged upon deck and hurled into the sea—still alive, and able for a while to swim after the ship, begging for mercy. Talbot, who, in his terror at what was going on, had sought refuge in the forecastle, and Brownrigg, who had fled aloft, were now called by the conspirators and offered their lives and equal share in the booty if they kept silent. It is needless to say that they joyfully accepted the terms thus unexpectedly offered them. The conspirators then rifled the vessel, divided the specie; and, under direction of Gibbs, who, from his being the only one understanding navigation, assumed command of the vessel, their course was laid for Long Island. When within 15 or 20 miles off Southampton light, the vessel was scuttled and fired, and they took to their boats; Gibbs, Wansley, Brownrigg and Dawes, with about \$31,000 of the money, in the long-boat, and Church, Talbot and Atwell, with about \$23,000, in the jolly-boat. The wind was blowing a gale, and in attempting to cross Duck (or Rockaway) Bar, the jolly-boat upset, and its occupants, with their share of the booty, were lost. The occupants of the other boat were compelled, by fear of a similar fate, to lighten their boat by throwing overboard all but \$5,000 of their stealings; but finally succeeded in reaching the shore of Pelican Beach, then part of Barren, now of Coney Island. Their first care was to dispose temporarily of the specie by burying it in a hole (dug with an oar) in the sand at a considerable distance from the shore, each taking out sufficient for his immediate wants. Food and lodging were their next most pressing wants, and meeting, on Pelican Beach, with Nicholas S. Williamson, of Gravesend, they told him a pitiable tale of shipwreck, and, getting from him the needed directions, they passed on to Dooley's Bay, on the northwest shore of Barren Island. Here resided John Johnson and wife, and his brother William, who kindly received and cared for the shipwrecked mariners, and gave up to them for the night their own room and beds. Brownrigg and the Johnson brothers thus happened to occupy chairs in the living-room; and as soon as the other inmates of the house were asleep, Brownrigg revealed the whole matter to the two Johnsons. In the morning, after getting such breakfast as the place afforded, the pirates desired the Johnsons to take them over to the hotel at Sheepshead

Bay, whence they might get a conveyance to Fulton ferry and New York. This the Johnsons did, and returned to Barren Island without unnecessary delay; and, proceeding to the spot described by Brownrigg (and to which they had gone in the early morning with Wausley to get some clothes left there), they dug up the specie, removed it to another hiding-place remote from its first location; and, by walking in the water, effaced all traces of the direction they had taken.

Meanwhile, Gibbs and his party were bargaining with Samuel Leonard, the hotel-keeper at Sheepshead Bay, when suddenly, in the presence of all, Brownrigg, declaring that he would go no further with them, denounced his companions as pirates and murderers, and unfolded the whole story of the *Vineyard's* fate. Wansley incontinently took to his heels to the woods, and Gibbs and Dawes were seized and bound by the inn-keeper and his people; and Justice John Van Dyke was summoned, who promptly issued warrants for the arrest of the pirates. The one constable of the village found his hands full in guarding Gibbs and Dawes; and so Robert Greenwood, of Sheepshead Bay, volunteered to go into the woods and look up Wansley. After an hour's search he found the negro, and presenting a huge pistol, ordered him to fall on his face and cross his hands behind his back. Wansley submitted, and Greenwood, sitting astride of him, tied his hands securely, ordered him to arise, and marched him back to Leonard's hotel. After the negro had been thoroughly secured, his captor showed him the pistol (*utterly destitute of either lock or load*), with the remark that it "was just as good's any other if you knewed how to use it." Gibbs, Wausley, and Dawes were then lodged in the county jail at Flatbush.

The Johnsons had been none too quick in securing the \$5,000; for, scarcely had they regained their home, when Squire Van Dyke, with Brownrigg as guide, appeared on the scene, and going right to the spot where the money had been deposited the day before, found it gone! Brownrigg was then sent to join the others at Flatbush; and from thence they were remanded to New York Bridewell. Indictments being found against Gibbs and Wansley, they were tried, and convicted on the testimony of Brownrigg and Dawes; and on the 11th of March, 1831, were sentenced to be hung: sentence being carried into effect on the 22d of April following.

John and Wm. Johnson, apprehensive of further search being made for the money, made no haste to get it home. In a day or two they were visited by agents of the insurance companies and an officer, who not only searched for the money on the beach, but thoroughly ransacked the Johnson abode from garret to cellar, without success. Having, finally, as they thought, eluded the vigilance of the law, John Johnson and wife planned to get possession of it without the assistance of William. Accordingly, one night, while the latter was



asleep, they stole out and unearthed the treasure, and reinterred it in two parcels, one of \$3,400, the other of about \$1,600. Knowing how closely William would scan the beach when he discovered his loss, they made only the slightest mark to designate the new place of deposit on Pelican Beach, by tying knots on the long sedge-grass, which could be seen only by the closest scrutiny. William's indignation, when he discovered the loss, was intense ; his suspicions fell upon his brother, and going to New York, he informed the insurance companies, who entered suit against John for recovery of the money. The trial, which was held before Judge Dean, in the Apprentices Library, in Brooklyn, ended in John's acquittal, for want of sufficient evidence. He then removed to Brooklyn, and William to Canarsie. But, when John went to look for his deposit, he found only the larger sum. A high tide had swept over the site of the other ; the action of the waves had loosened the knots in the sedge-grass, and the \$1,600 was lost to him forever ! In 1842 the Skidmore family, living on "Ruffle Bar," concluded to remove their house, in sections, to a new site on the shore of Dooley's Bay, Barren Island. The house was accordingly taken down piecemeal, and most of it carried across the bay and piled up near its future site. The moving was not quite completed on the day appointed. On the foundation of their old home had been left the wooden ceiling of an upper chamber, in one piece or section. During the night a violent storm drove the tide up to an unprecedented height; and, in the morning, when Jacob Skidmore arose, he was surprised to find that his chamber-ceiling had been brought over by the tide, from Ruffle Bar to Dooley's Bay, without injury. Anxious to learn whether any other of his property had gone farther west, he proceeded along the northerly, or inside, shore of Pelican Beach, which then had become separated by a small inlet, shallow enough to be forded at low-tide, but at high-tide floating skiffs through it from the ocean to Dooley's Bay. The eastern part of Pelican Beach then had a ridge of sand-hills, while the western was as flat and level as the whole of it is now. Arrived at these sand-hills, from whence to get a view of the surrounding country, he saw none of his lumber ; and, acceding to the suggestion of his companion, Mr. Loring, hurried back so as to cross the inlet before the tide got too high. Taking a last look, as they did so, they noticed the shore or ocean-side of Pelican Beach much washed away, and also saw his neighbors, Willett Smith and Henry Brewer, approaching. Smith and Brewer came on easterly until they reached the spot where John Johnson and wife had last buried the \$1,600; and here, by the storm over night, the silver dollars had been uncovered, and lay scattered along the beach. The two men lost no time in filling pockets and boots, and carried away all they could ; but they could not keep their good luck to themselves, and in a day or two business was almost entirely

suspended in Gravesend, and every man who could got to Pelican Beach. The intense excitement only gradually subsided when a succeeding storm placed the location of the "find" so far to sea as to be absolutely beyond further search.

**Modern Development of Coney Island.**—About the year 1844 Messrs. Eddy and Hart, two New York gentlemen, leased a portion of the western part of Coney Island, and on it built a large circular platform, over which an enormous tent was erected, and the "Pavilion" at Coney Island Point sprang into existence. A dock, or wharf, was built just north of the westerly part of Coney Island, and a number of bathing-houses built on the southern shore of the Point. This was the commencement of what has since become familiar to many of the residents of New York and vicinity as "Norton's Point." Prior to this occupancy by Messrs. Eddy and Hart, this spot had been the home of Gilbert Hicks, who succeeded Henry Brown, the sole occupant of this part of Coney Island at about the close of the Revolutionary war. When Messrs. Eddy and Hart started their enterprise, Cropsey and Woglom were proprietors of one of the only two hotels of Coney Island—the "Coney Island House," built by the Coney Island Road and Bridge Company. The other was owned and managed by that patriarch of Coney Island, John Wyckoff, Sr., formerly school-master of Gravesend, afterward hotel-keeper opposite the church in Gravesend, from whence he removed with his wife and family to Coney Island, and built what, with additions, soon enjoyed a most enviable reputation as "Wyckoff's Hotel." The Pavilion, Wyckoff's, and the Coney Island House, with the exception of the two farm-houses on the respective farms—into which the arable land had been divided—the Van Sicklen and the Voorhies farm-houses, constituted the whole of the residences on the island. But the day of development was drawing nigh; and, when Daniel Morell, the toll-gatherer on the "shell-road," counted three hundred vehicles of a warm fourth of July (Sunday) driving to Coney Island, many of the staid, good people of Gravesend bewailed the existence of a place whose attractions caused such wholesale Sabbath-breaking.

In October, 1847, Dr. Allen Clarke, seeing the desirability of Coney Island as a summer resort, bought a piece of ground of Mr. Court Van Sicklen (by giving a mortgage on it), and, just north of the Coney Island House, the "Oceanic" was erected, run for a season, and burned down. It was said it caught fire accidentally, and some people believed it. The property passed into the hands of Judge John Vanderbilt, who built another—a larger and a better hotel—on the site of the former, and it became a very fashionable resort; but, after a few years of varying success, it shared the common fate of sea-side resorts—it burned down. The premises are now incorporated with those of the old Coney Island House.



Another step in the development of the island was taken when Mr. Partridge, the owner of the Dye Wood Mills below Unionville, interested himself in the scheme of a railroad from Coney Island across the creek over West Meadow Bank, along "the twelve morgen," through the villages of Bath and New Utrecht, and along the new plank-road to the "new," or Fifth avenue, entrance, to Greenwood cemetery. After many and vexatious delays, toils and troubles, on the part of its promoters, The Brooklyn, Bath and Coney Island Railroad, as its incorporators called it—the "Dummy Road," as it was known to the public generally—was opened to travel. In the meanwhile Mr. Stephen H. Bogart had erected, at its Coney Island terminus, a hotel, elegant for its day and generation, which was called the "Tivoli." But Mr. Bogart died, and the hotel shared the common fate of large sea-side hotels—it burned down.

Another impetus to the development of Coney Island was the completion of the "horse-car" route to Coney Island—down the old Coney Island road, as Coney Island avenue was then called; and the building of the restaurant on Coney Island, so long kept by George Green.

About the year 1868 Mr. William A. Engeman conceived the idea of purchasing the interests of the two or three hundred heirs of the persons to whom, in 1766, the thirty-nine lots comprising the middle or southern division of Coney Island had been allotted; and, by gathering together, in his own ownership, the shreds and patches of interests, divided, subdivided and again subdivided (until in many cases the resources of arithmetical calculation were severely tasked to determine just how little any one particular person owned), to thus ultimately acquire a property on which he could erect a great family home and house. This task, it may readily be imagined, was far more easy of conception than of execution. Many a person of less indomitable perseverance than Mr. ENGEMAN would have quailed under the difficulties attending the making of searches (in most instances amounting to complete genealogies) of thirty-nine families for one and one-fourth centuries back; and whose members were scattered not only throughout the various States of the Union, but some of whom had found homes in such far off places as the Sandwich Islands. Energy, perseverance, and well-directed, intelligent industry, however, finally unravelled the twisted mazes of family-ties, hunted for and found the scattered members, negotiated for and purchased their interests; and, as usual, success crowned well-directed, persistent efforts. Mr. Engeman had passed through many sad and bitter experiences in life, and found in the excitement attending this undertaking a relief from oppressive and almost unsupportable reflections.

The premises were purchased, and comprise what is now known as the Fair Grounds, the Ocean Hotel prop-

erty, the Brighton Hotel property, and the Bathing Pavilion, taking in all the ground between that of Manhattan Beach and the common lands of the town of Gravesend. The Ocean Hotel was built, and in a quiet, respectable family sea-side hotel, refined guests found an agreeable relief from the noise and hubbub which even then had begun to pervade the more western part of the island.

In the meanwhile the other parts of the island were beginning to feel the impetus which was crowding Coney Island into prominence as a competitor for the patronage of the seaside-loving population of the metropolis and suburbs, in the heated summer terms. Settlements of restaurants, lager-beer-saloons and bathing-establishments began to spring up with unwonted activity; at first in the immediate neighborhood of the railroad termini, and soon from thence spreading, laterally, along-shore on either side, till, in a few years, the entire beach front was thickly studded with these aspirants for public favor. These buildings were not of the elaborate nature characteristic of the more pretentious "pavilions" of to-day. Far from it. Most of them were rude, unplanned boxes, having a door with a hole in it for light, and each furnished inside with a couple of hat-and-coat-hooks, a rude bench, and a pail of water for rinsing the feet after the bath. But they were the pioneers to what has since become a vast business during the heated days of the summer.

Then, a law was passed providing for the opening and grading of Gravesend avenue, at the expense of the holders of property on both sides of it; and the Prospect Park and Coney Island Railroad (Culver's) took it, without paying for it, as the location of their road. Naturally, the property-holders felt indignant at thus being compelled to open and grade a road at their own expense for a railroad company; and not even the admitted fact that this railroad is altogether the best managed and operated of all the roads to Coney Island, has enabled it to overcome this feeling.

The building of this railroad; its hotel, long known as "Cable's," at its shore terminus; the purchase, and the re-erection on Coney Island, of one of the observatories erected at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, as an "observatory;" and latterly, its magnificent depot, have all combined to make this place a center of attraction to a vast multitude to whom the low rate of fares charged is by no means a source of mis-comfort.

Next was the building of the Ocean Parkway, that magnificent highway from Prospect Park to the sea. (See page 172). This Ocean Parkway, and its lateral or shore branch, called the Concourse, all aided in helping Coney Island to a place in the public estimation.

While John I. Snedeker was host of the "Oceanic Hotel" on Coney Island (for so the old "Coney Island House" was christened in later years), among his guests was a wealthy New York banker, whose sick infant



had been ordered to be taken to the seaside for the benefit of the pure air. This gentleman, impressed with the healthfulness of the place, in a casual conversation with the host one evening, requested the latter to ascertain whether any property could be purchased in the vicinity, as he was anxious to purchase in so salubrious a situation. Mr. Snedeker accordingly made enquiry in the village-store at Gravesend, and was directed to William H. Stillwell, whose long residence and position as a resident civil-engineer and surveyor had placed him in a position to be especially familiar with lands and titles in that section. This resulted in an interview between the latter and the banker, one Saturday evening, at the hotel; when the former called the attention of the latter to a tract of land which might possibly be purchased, and the next afternoon the two visited the locality. This banker was Austin Corbin, Esq., and the spot shown was "The Sedge Bank," since become famous as "Manhattan Beach." The banker, pleased with the location, took immediate steps to purchase the property, which was successfully accomplished by the agency of the other, without unnecessary loss of time, and forms the site of the Manhattan and Oriental Hotels, and the vast tract on which they are located.

While the Manhattan Beach property was being developed, the consolidation of the two railroad enterprises produced the Brooklyn, Flatbush and Coney Island Railway Company (or, as it is more familiarly known, the Brighton Beach Railroad), whose hotel, so widely known, is located on a part of the "middle division," purchased of Mr. Engeman, and is too well known to need particular description.

In 1878 a company was organized with Jacob Lorillard, of New York city, as president, who purchased a lease held by William A. Engeman, of a shore-front lot of land on Coney Island; contracted with the Delaware Bridge Company to build the iron pier on the site of the old one built by Mr. Engeman, and the present elegant structure is the result of their labor and invested capital.

While all the tracts known as the "Middle" or "Engeman's" division, and the "Sedge Bank" or "Eastern division," now Manhattan Beach, are, and have been, confessedly and concededly, private property for at least a century and a quarter; the ownership of the remainder of the island, from a line drawn a short distance easterly of the Ocean Parkway, has not been undisputed. There are two essentially different and distinct theories in relation to this matter, the proper solution of which depends entirely on the language of the original grants.

The original charter of Governor Kieft of 1645, and of which all the other and subsequent charters are confirmatory, grants "To the Honourable Lady Deborah Moody, Sir Henry Moody, Barronnett, Sergeant James Hubbard, Ensigne George Baxter, their associates

*heirs, executors, administrators, successors and assigns, or any they should join in association with them;*" a certain quantity or parcel of land, etc., etc.

Was this grant of these lands made to the town as a corporation, or to the individuals as tenants in common? If to the former, then so much of it as has not been heretofore set off in severalty, and assigned to individuals, belongs to the town as a corporation; while, if to the latter, then the heirs of these are the owners of so much of it as they or their ancestors have not divided as tenants in common. This latter class are usually known as the "patentee" party, and the former as the "town" party. The arguments used by each are not without weight; and, in view of the enormous value of the property involved—a property which makes Gravesend probably the wealthiest town in the State—not without interest. The "town" party claim:

1. That the grant was made to the corporation, who, at their town-meetings, divided so much of it from time to time as their convenience required, and whatever was not so divided was retained by the corporation.
2. That all divisions and allotments of lands were made either in town-meetings or by authority of them.
3. That every known division of land is entered on the town-books as an act of the town.
4. That the town has shown from the first an uninterrupted possession, passing repeated orders for the care and management of them.

On the other or "patentee" side of the question, it is claimed that the grant was made to the individuals as tenants-in-common; for

1. The charter authorized the persons therein named to form a town—it did not create, but authorized the grantees to create, a town. This implied an action by the grantees subsequent to the granting of the authority to act. The town was to be formed by the people who had received authority to form it—consequently the town could have had no existence at the time the authority to form it was given, and therefore the grant could not have been made to the town. It did not exist when the grant was made.

2. The grant is made to certain persons "and any they (that is the grantees) should join in association" with them. That is, not any who should come to reside there—not all who should join them—but only those whom the original patentees should elect—should accept—"should join in association with them."

3. The manifest propriety that they who had braved the toil, privations and hardship of settling a new colony, should possess that to which their time and labor had given a value.

4. That all divisions of lands were uniformly into thirty-nine parts, or shares corresponding to the number of original patentees—although these divisions, some sixteen in number, covered a period from 1643 (the first) to 1766 (the date of the last division of land).

5. That their title as tenants in common in and to the



undivided lands, is equally as good as to the land divided—the source of title being the same in either case.

6. That although these divisions were made at town-meetings, they were so made merely as matters of convenience, not of necessity; and some of these meetings are expressly stated to be meetings of the proprietors; as for instance the meeting at which the arable lands on Gisbert's Island is decided to be divided, is expressly declared to be a meeting "of the owners of the rights," etc.

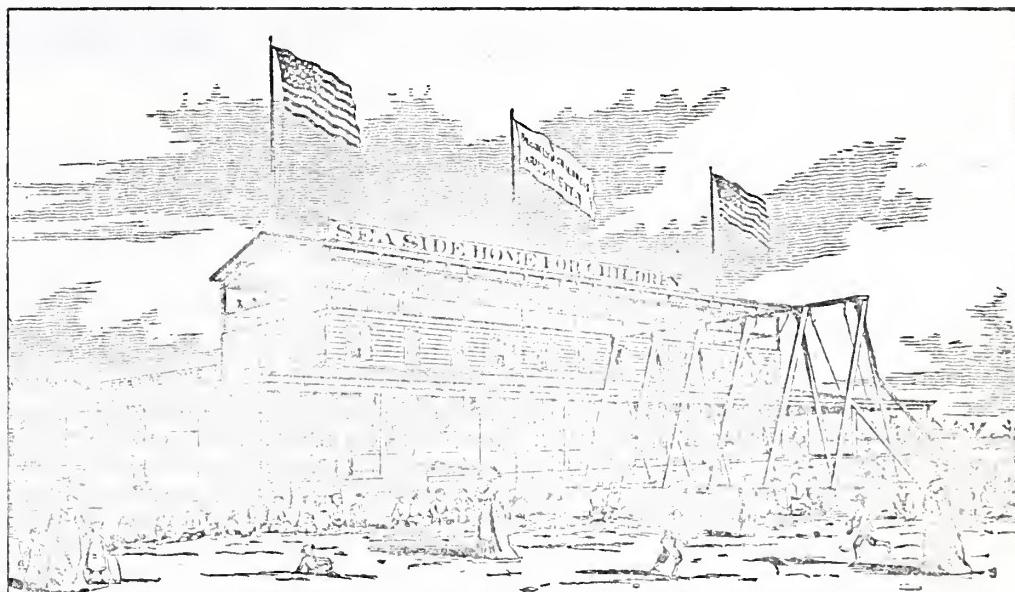
The above is believed to be a fair statement of the case. It is proper to add that the representatives of both sides have, all along, maintained and acted on their convictions with considerable pertinacity. While the town, through various officers, has, from time to time, rented the lands; on two occasions, at least, in 1814 and 1820, they divided all accrued rentals up to these dates respectively, among

the representatives of the patentees. We note, also, that the records show frequent sales of "rights" and "thirty-ninths" in the individual commonage, and devises of the same; and that, at no time, has a proposition arisen for a sale of any of these lands, without an active protest against such action on the part of a corporation, looked upon as merely a trustee for private parties.

Notably was this feeling manifested when, some years since, the Quarantine Commissioners of the State of New York undertook to avail themselves of the opportunity which the Legislature of the State had afforded them, of selecting Coney Island Point (Norton's Point) as a site for a quarantine establishment. The Legislature had passed an act appropriating \$50,000 toward the purchase of a site to be selected by the Quarantine Commissioners, who were also allowed to take the same, if agreement as to price could not be arrived at, by virtue of "the right of eminent domain." Of course no agreement looking to a sale of part of Coney Island for a nominal sum to a corporation who would so use it as to destroy the value of the remainder, could be arrived at; and the Court appointed Commissioners to appraise the value of the lands proposed to be taken. No sooner had the initiative steps herein been taken, than a large number of persons appeared and insisted on being made parties to the proceedings; alleging that they, with others, were the rightful owners

of the fee of the premises sought to be acquired; that the town, as their trustee, had collected rents and exercised acts of ownership for so long a period that the corporation had come to be looked on as the owner of the tract. They were joined as parties, and had the Emigration Commissioners succeeded in the scheme, a desperate legal warfare respecting the ownership of the price paid, would undoubtedly have ensued. This was avoided, however, by the Commissioners of Appraisal, in their report of the value of the property, placing so high an estimate on it as to far exceed the appropriation therefor, had the latter been tenfold larger than it was. And the Quarantine Commissioners abandoned the attempt of wresting from the town its most valuable property.

In 1879 Mr. William A. Engeman, one of the pioneers of Coney Island, opened a mile-track upon land which he owned at the island. It is known as the *Brighton*



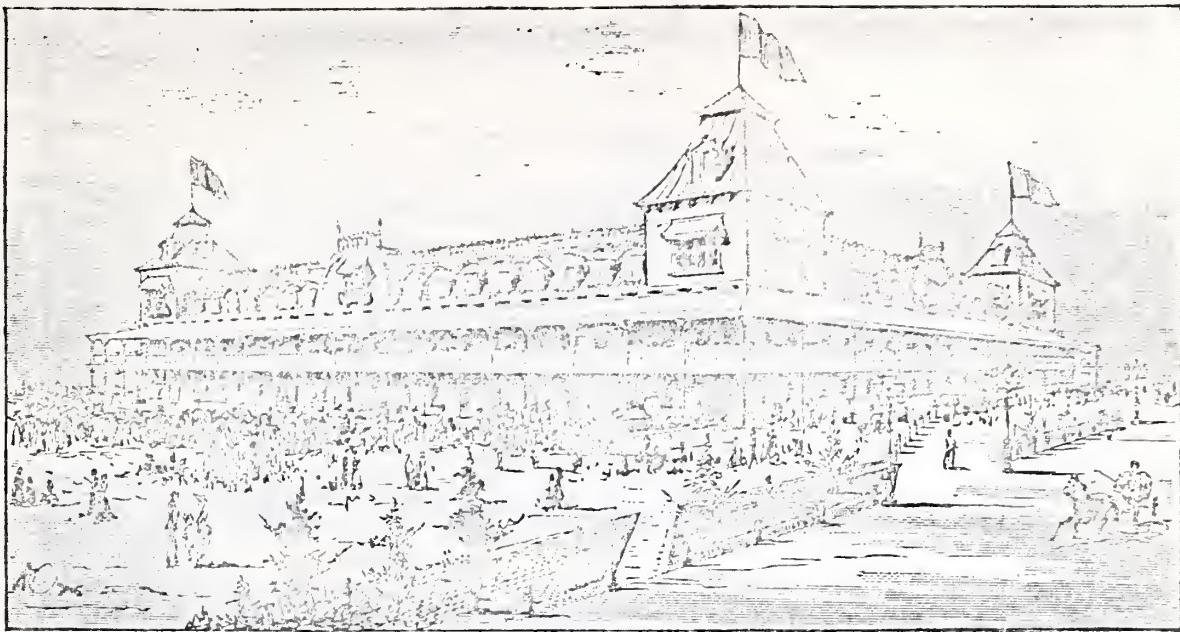
THE SEA-SIDE HOME FOR CHILDREN, WEST BRIGHTON BEACH, CONEY ISLAND.

*Beach Fair Grounds.* It contains a grand stand, and other adjuncts considered necessary for sporting purposes. The meetings are continued all summer, and it is considered quite popular among the sporting fraternity. It is the sole property of Mr. Engeman, and is very valuable.

*The Sea-Side Home for Children.*—*The Brooklyn Children's Aid Society* is doing a noble work here during the summer months, of which a full account will be found under the head of *Charitable Institutions* of the City of Brooklyn.

*Sea-Side Sanitarium.*—After two years' effort, *The Children's Aid Society of New York*, have succeeded in leasing lot No. 37, at Coney Island, for the purpose of erecting a sea-side sanitarium. They propose erecting a beautiful building; which they are enabled to do by the gift of \$10,000 from Mr. D. Willis James, of New York.





PAUL BAUER'S WEST BRIGHTON HOTEL

**PAUL BAUER.**—“Mine host” of the West Brighton Hotel, whose portrait appears on the opposite page, is a fine specimen of manhood, both physically and mentally. Tall and athletic in form, he has a keen eye and an energy of manner which denote truly his quick perception, prompt action, and remarkable executive ability.

Although he is master of the English language, a slight German accent betrays his foreign birth, which occurred in Austria, August 18th, 1846. His boyhood was passed there in school and in various attempts at employment. He was successively placed at several trades; but his innate energy, and love of out-door activity, revolted from plodding labor, and he could not be kept at work. He might have become a “ne'er do weel,” had he not decided, at the age of fifteen, to try the greater freedom and better opportunities to be found in America. Landing in New York in 1863, he maintained himself for a time by different employments, and then enlisted in the United States Army, serving three years in the Light artillery, and two years longer in the 4th Cavalry. Although he entered the service as a private, his energy and ability soon raised him from the ranks, and he was successively promoted until he became Captain. After five years he left the service honorably. In later years he was a Captain in the Fifth Regiment, and also a Corporal in the Separate Troop, under Col. Spencer. After leaving the army, he was employed in a restaurant in New York city, where his natural abilities and force of character made their mark at once; so that he soon left a subordinate position to assume the management of the Van Dyke House, and afterwards of the Pacify Potel. Here his success, both as caterer and general manager, was instant and abundant, demonstrating him to be one of the few who can successfully preside over an hostelry. He saved some money, for which he sought a profitable investment. Early in 1876, during a pleasure ride with his family to Coney Island, he was sagacious enough to foresee the future of what is now America’s greatest seaside resort. When the carriage was almost overturned in a hollow near the present site of the club house, and Mrs. Bauer remarked: “This is the worst place I ever saw,” her husband replied: “It can be made the best.” With characteristic promptness, on the following day, he secured from the authorities of Gravesend, a lease of twelve acres fronting

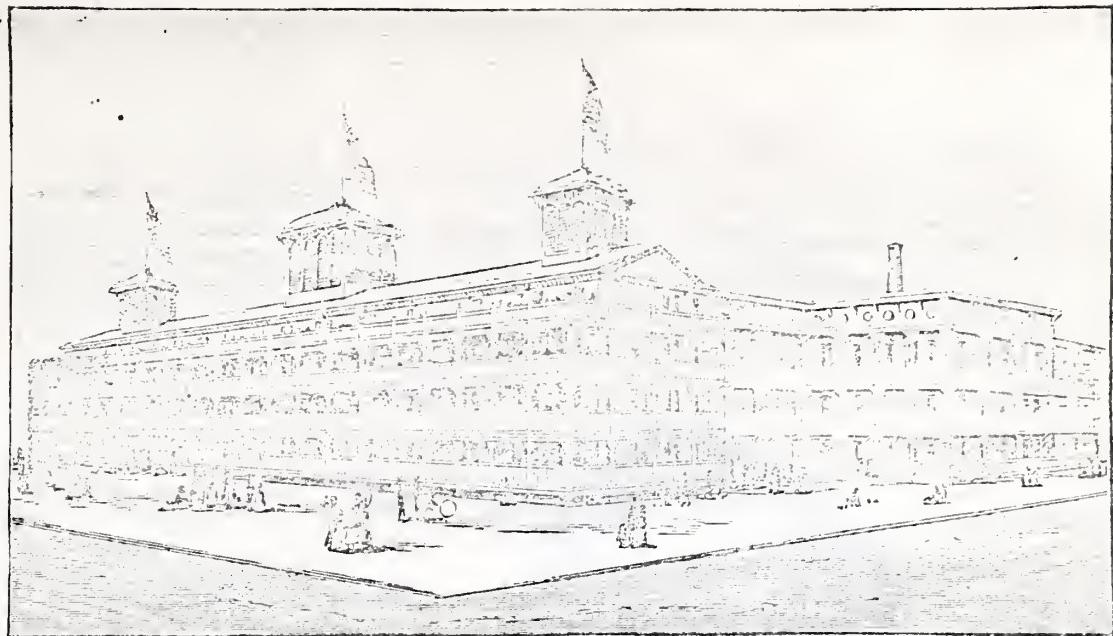
on the beach, at what is now known as West Brighton; and on the 22d of February commenced the erection of the “West Brighton Hotel,” which was opened for guests on the 2d of May following. It is an immense palace-like structure, 242 feet long, by 145 feet wide, with a dining-room capable of seating six thousand people comfortably, at one time. It is the largest and most tastefully decorated dining-room under one roof to be found at the Island; in which, on several occasions, ten thousand guests have dined to their satisfaction. There are rooms for two hundred and fifty guests, with private dining-rooms; and four tower-rooms, for the especial use of coaching parties. Mr. Bauer is also the owner of the Pavilion opposite, of a large bathing establishment, and a number of other buildings devoted to the entertainment of the public. He has also leased a portion of the ground to others for similar purposes. Mr. Bauer retains the general supervision and management of his hotel, and, by careful and systematic attention to details, he achieves the greatest success, and his fame attracts many of the best people to the “West Brighton Hotel.” Mr. Bauer believes that liberality to the public begets their liberality in return; therefore, all the appointments in and about the hotel are of the best. Fine music is discoursed every afternoon and evening by two orchestras, one of them the famous “Vienna Ladies’ Orchestra;” and by numerous soloists, both vocal and instrumental, attracting crowds of respectful listeners.

Administrative ability of the highest order is requisite for the management of so vast an institution; and this Mr. Bauer possesses in a rare degree; as well as capacity for details, thoroughness, promptness, and financial ability. He also has the faculty of wisely selecting his assistants. His success at West Brighton has fully justified his judgment of seven years ago, and brought great pecuniary gains from his investment in Coney Island sand.

He is a member of the Masonic order, also of several gun-clubs, and of some social organizations.

Naturally fond of society, Mr. Bauer is affable and pleasant in manner; and a gentleman who has gained and retains the friendship of thousands, and who feels a pardonable pride in the success which he has wrought out by his unshaded efforts.





FELTMAN'S OCEAN PAVILION, WEST BRIGHTON BEACH, CONEY ISLAND.

CHARLES FELTMAN, the first pioneer of Coney Island improvement, was born at Verden, in Hanover, Germany, Nov. 8, 1841.

Very early in life, when but a mere boy, he became infatuated with the idea of leaving his native country for the shores of America : and, as years rolled on, his thoughts kept pace with time, until, arriving at the age of fourteen years, despite the opposition of his parents and friends, without means and alone, he succeeded, after many disappointments, in finding a sailing-vessel on which he could work his passage as cabin-boy to a country he had often heard of, far beyond the sea.

Early on a bright May morning, in the year 1856, leaving all that was dear to him on earth, he sailed from Bremen, Germany, in the ship "Auguste;" and after several weeks at sea amid all kinds of weather and trials, he arrived a penniless and friendless boy, among strangers in a strange land. Unable to speak the English language, and not having a friend to whom he could apply, he sought in vain for employment and barely succeeded in obtaining the necessities of life by doing odd jobs occasionally picked up in the streets of New York.

During the "panic" winter of 1857 he fared "very slim," subsisting chiefly upon stale bread and water, until the spring of 1858, when he obtained his first legitimate employment at East New York as a laborer, ostensibly in a coal-yard; but was compelled to divide his attention between a small farm and grocery store, controlled by the same party; working from 4 A. M. to 10 P. M. for \$3 per month and board. This variety of labor, as "man of all work," at first had its charms; but the long hours, combined with hard work and small pay, grew distasteful to young Feltman. He sought and found a change by obtaining employment in a bakery on Smith, near Church street, South Brooklyn. His labors were here divided between driving a wagon during the day and assisting in the bakery at night. One day while at work in the bakery, he met with quite a severe accident; which, in consequence of improper treatment on the part of a

quack doctor, rendered the use of his right arm impossible for about eight months. Meanwhile his limited savings melted away.

Nothing daunted, and willing to work, he obtained a position as an apprentice in Kieran's bakery on Fulton, near Jay street, where he remained about two years; and during the year 1866, by close economy, he was enabled to enter into business for himself as a baker. His first place of business was on Classon avenue, near Van Brunt street, where by close attention he supplied several routes and did a thriving trade. He transferred to Parkville, where he purchased some property and erected a building in which he continued business until the opening of the Boulevard compelled him to leave and return to Brooklyn.

The next attempt was at the corner of Sixth avenue and Tenth street, where he erected a fine brick structure, with brown stone trimmings, still standing, and owned by him. When he commenced building neither street had been cut through, and people laughed at his, so called, "fool-hardiness," for building such a fine structure in an open field. But having been blessed with that prophetic intuition which makes the successful engineer and capitalist, he steadily foresaw the future demands of that portion of the city; which, in a short time was fully verified, as the progress of that section now proves. And from this point he renewed the bakery business and controlled a large Coney Island trade, supplying the "shanties" with bread, pastry and ice-cream.

During the early part of the winter of 1874, his career as caterer to the visitors of the island was first commenced. At that time, more than three-quarters of Coney Island was a barren, sandy waste, and wind-swept region; where the Atlantic surges beat with unrestrained violence; inhabited at the extreme west end by some few "clammers," "rouches," and "three-card-monte-men," who bore the name of "Coney catchers." In the vicinity of Gunther's depot (the only railway then running to Coney Island, except the horses), were a few common-place, rough-board shanties, one of which Feltman obtained from a former customer, Martin Hook, in





B. Selkman



consideration of the payment of \$500 for one year's lease of an unouth shanty, 16x25 feet, adjoining the site of said depot. He erected, in connection with this, a shelter-house, 25x50 feet, fitted up a bar and lunch counter, and commenced a career which now justly places him as foremost in his business. Until then, exorbitant prices were charged for all "solids and fluids;" but he began by selling luncheons and "clam-roasts" at extreme low prices, including ice-cream at 15 cents instead of 25 cents, lager at five instead of ten cents per glass, etc., etc., until, at the end of the season, so successful had been the enterprise that the bar-receipts alone were \$6,000; \$3,000 of which was divided as net profits with his business partner, Henry Wulff.

Hook, the leasor, having prided himself on having driven such a sharp bargain, was considerably chagrined when he learned of the result; and when Feltman, at the expiration of his one year's lease, offered him \$1,200 yearly rental for the beach-front only (for which Hook was paying but \$70) it was rejected. It was then offered for \$2,000, which was promptly refused by Feltman. Meanwhile, Henry C. Ditmas' lease of the "Washington Hotel," a low, two-story frame building, 75x25 feet in size, and occupying the present site of what is now the "Sea Beach Hotel," was quite anxious to sell out, having lost considerable. At this time his lease was nearly expired, having but one year longer to run; but, acting upon the advice of Feltman, who instructed him how to proceed, he secured an extension of ten years longer lease, for which Feltman agreed to pay him \$4,000 for all right, title and interest to said new lease. When the money was tendered, however, it was rejected; with the information that he (Ditmas) had been offered \$6,000 for his lease, and would not sell for less. Thereupon Feltman, having been released from his verbal contract, returned to Brooklyn; while Ditmas, after looking in vain for a purchaser of his lease, importuned Feltman again and again, until "sick and discouraged," he readily accepted Feltman's proposition of \$3,800, including all household effects, which in the previous agreement was not enumerated. Immediately upon the transfer of said lease to Mr. Feltman, he had plans drawn of his own architectural designing, for a new building two stories high, 55x125 feet, with a wing of 25x85 feet, and more complete in appointments than any structure then existing on the island. This he submitted to Godfrey C. Gunther, President of the only steam-railway then running to the island, and to him he made a full statement of his intentions, and urged the necessity of later evening trains (than 7:15) from the island, to accommodate thousands of business men and working people, who could by this means avail themselves of the privileges offered at this resort, even after ordinary business hours; but all the arguments he could present failed to induce Mr. Gunther to accede to his wishes.

He next applied to the Superintendent of the Brooklyn and Coney Island Horse Car Road, and again was met by rebuffs. The only person he received any encouragement from was Mr. A. R. Culver, whom he met at his office in New York city, and after submitting his plans, etc., he received within one week a decided promise that the new road, when completed, would run late evening trains.

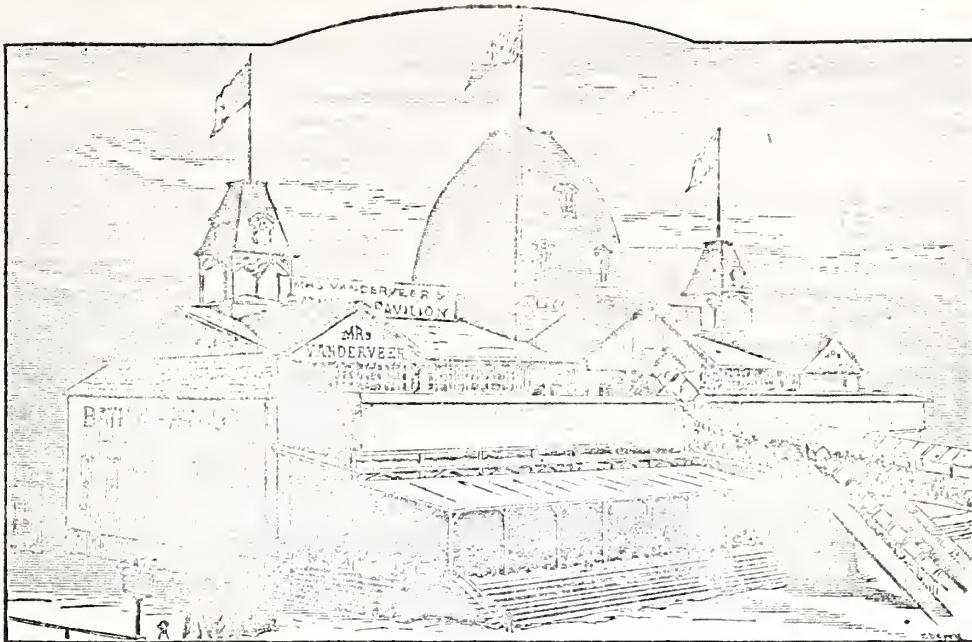
Having succeeded thus far in his plans, he commenced at once the erection of his building, facing it in an easterly direction and toward the terminus of the new railroad. When completed, at an outlay of \$20,000, he named it the "Ocean Pavilion;" advertised very extensively, and engaged for the season Wannemacher's 71st Regiment Band, which was the first music ever performed on the island under like circumstances. By hard work and dint of perseverance, he overcame all opposition and division. Although apprehen-

sive of the result, his first season in the "Ocean Pavilion" was a success. The following season he was the first to introduce vocal music successfully; since which time, others following his example have caused instrumental and vocal music to be one of the greatest features of Coney Island. Every succeeding season he has added to the original building; until, at the present writing, he has a larger structure, in point of square feet of flooring, than that of any on Coney Island. It contains the largest ball-room in the world, the walls of which are tastefully and elaborately decorated with panels, consisting of allegorical figures, landscapes of German scenes, and beautiful characters representing Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, etc., executed by a masterly hand. This, when illuminated at night by eleven electric lights, besides 400 gas-jets, presents a beautiful fairy-land aspect. This magnificent room, three stories high, furnishes ample accommodation for over two thousand dancers upon the floor at one time. Its dimensions are 223 feet in length, by 41 feet and six inches in width, with a ceiling of 32 feet: the roof of which is supported by seventeen iron trusses, and capable of sustaining 250,000 pounds weight. This feature of construction was originally designed for the purpose of a theatre, the balconies of which were to be suspended from the roof; thus leaving the auditorium below entirely free from the always to be dreaded and ever objectionable columns. Or again, should he at any time desire to add more sleeping apartments for guests, he may suspend the entire third floor from the roof and partition it off at pleasure, without the necessity of disfiguring the ball-room in the least, as before mentioned. To this building is added two wings, one of which is 135 feet long by 35 feet wide; the other being 140 feet long by 36 feet wide; while around the entire structure is a large, broad piazza, 15 feet wide, capable of seating 5,000 people comfortably; the entire facilities affording accommodation for 20,000 people. 118 rooms have recently been added in the upper portion of one of the wings, for the use of boarders each one being large and airy, containing marble wash-basins, gas, and electric bells, and finely carpeted and furnished. The summer garden, quite a feature of this immense establishment, in which is introduced a choice variety entertainment, is 167 feet long, by 57 feet wide, containing quite 300 evergreen trees, closely planted in large boxes along the sides. It was here Mr. Feltman first introduced to the American public, after a visit to Germany in the fall of 1879, the famous "Tyrolean Warblers;" since which time he has had the best talent which money could obtain.

During his second season as host of the "Ocean Pavilion," initiatory steps were taken to develop a specialty he now largely enjoys, which is that of entertaining lodge-festivals, etc. The steady growth and popularity of this class of patronage may be estimated from the fact, that from two in one season, he has entertained as many as *thirty-seven* such gatherings, varying from three to ten thousand each; while the excellent character and good order observable at these excursion parties renders the "Ocean Pavilion" the most famous resort on the Atlantic coast.

Mr. Feltman has succeeded far beyond his most sanguine expectations, having received his *full share* of patronage. He is one of the most affable, energetic, frank and open-hearted men on the beach; while in stature he is medium tall and well-proportioned, quick in his comprehension of business chances as well as in social impulses; "Once a friend always a friend" is his maxim. He points with considerable pride to his out-door garden, consisting of trees and shrubbery, as the only successful effort on Coney Island in rescuing a little of the sand from its normal condition of barrenness, and placing it in condition for thrifty vegetation.





MRS. VANDERVEER'S BATHING PAVILION, WEST BRIGHTON BEACH, CONEY ISLAND.

**MRS. WILLIAM VANDERVEER.**—Mrs. Vanderveer's pleasant face and buxom figure is well known to the *habitués* of Coney Island ; and her life possesses much of the romance of success. A native of Newfoundland—Lucy Devlin by name—she was the youngest of three daughters. Her father, a baker doing a large business, was unfortunately drowned while on his return from a visit to Boston. The bereaved widow came on, with her young family, to Brooklyn, to meet some relatives; but, finding they had removed to Canada, she concluded to remain ; and, having a little means, established herself in a small business, in which she was assisted by her daughters. About 1857, Lucy, the subject of our sketch, married Mr. William Vanderveer, a native of Newtown, L. I., and a plasterer and brick-layer, by trade. He was afterward a captain in the Brooklyn police ; and, subsequently, held an appointment as inspector of sewers. Mrs. Vanderveer first commenced business on her own account by keeping a fruit and confectionery store at the City Hotel, which formerly occupied the site of the present County Court House. Thirteen years ago, her husband came to Coney Island, in the way of his trade (in partnership with Mr. Dibble); and, a year later, she followed him. Her first venture here was that of a fruit and confectionery stand on the piazza of the Neptune House, which then stood where the Children's Aid Society's place now is. Here she made money, and invested it; at first, in the construction of twelve bathing houses. The next season she increased the number to seventy-five, and the year after, she had two hundred in use upon the beach. These she worked until she had earned sufficient with which to erect a hotel—the present Vanderveer House. This was in 1875 ; and, after that was paid for, she erected the present elegant and commodious *Bathing Pavilion* known by her name. Both of these buildings were constructed by Supervisor McKane. The ocean-front which

Mrs. Vanderveer occupies is about 175 feet in width, stretching back to the street, and most conveniently located to the Culver Railroad Depot, the Iron-Piers, etc.

The Pavilion is a picturesque and admirably planned building, of 172 feet length and 65 depth ; three stories in height. It furnishes accommodations for 500 bathers; as well as a large Marvin safe for the reception of their valuables while bathing ; and it also has *warm* salt-water baths ; an excellent restaurant and bar, reception-parlors, etc. Its cost was nearly \$46,000.

Mrs. Vanderveer has not been unmindful of the personal safety of her customers, as well as of their valuables. She first purchased the patent of Captain Street's Patent Elevated Life-Lines, which are now in very general use ; keeps a life-boat out constantly upon the water in front of her establishment during the day ; and two beach-guardsmen on duty daily. As many as 300 or 400 persons are frequently found bathing at Mrs. Vanderveer's beach. No less than 5,500 bathing suits form a part of the equipment of the establishment ; for the washing and drying of which there is an extensive laundry and steam drying-room, from which, also, is furnished the motive-power for the electric-lights which supply the Pavilion, Hotel, Iron Pier and Observatory near by. Mrs. Vanderveer naturally recalls with pleasurable pride her early struggles in the erection and equipment of this Pavilion; which, when furnished, her sons painted for her, and which her daughters assist her in caring for. Not less is she proud of her very excellent hotel, 100 by 40 feet in size, and with three stories, containing 36 guest-rooms, parlors, a large bar and restaurant ; and having attached a livery of twenty horses, etc.

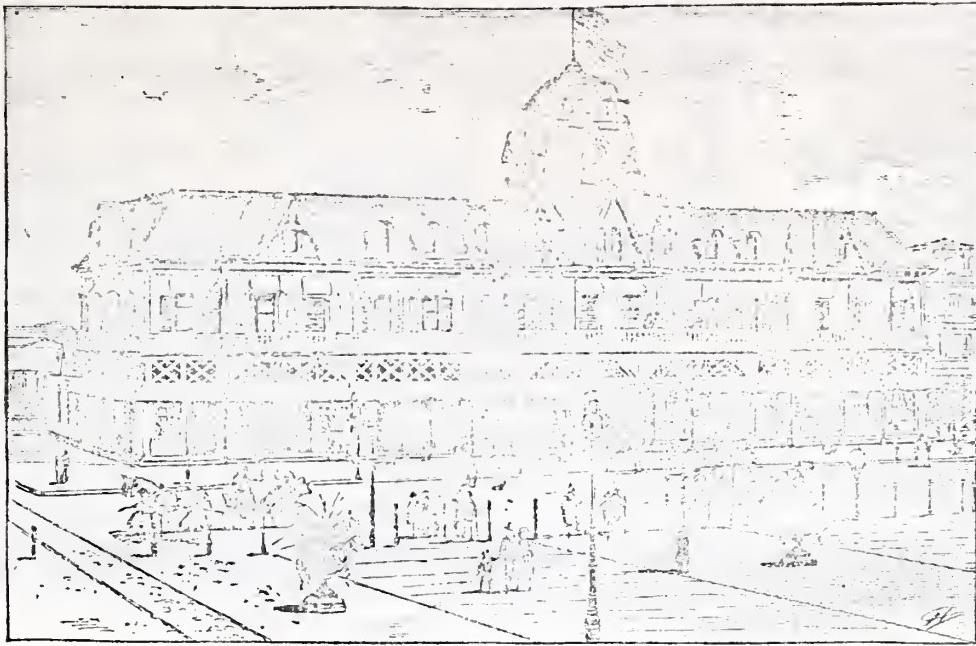
All this, as the result of thirteen years of a woman's labor and industry, is a record which cannot be despised ; and forms a portion of Coney Island history which cannot be overlooked by the veracious chronicler.





MRS. LUCY VANDERVEER.

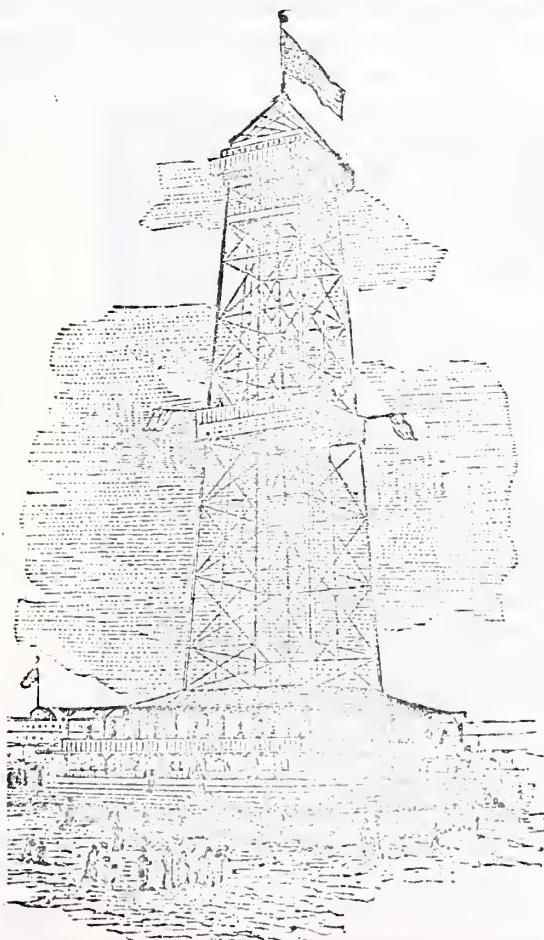




DEPOT OF PROSPECT PARK &amp; CONEY ISLAND R. R., WEST BRIGHTON, CONEY ISLAND.

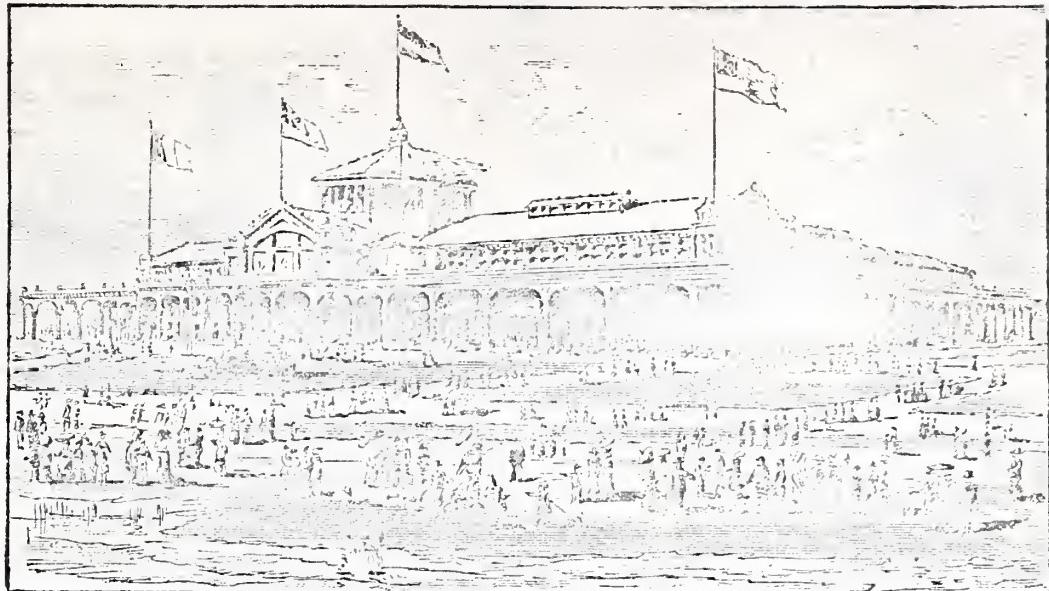
Feltman's, Bauer's and Mrs. Vandever's establishments form the substantial centre, as it were, of what is known as "West Brighton Beach," extending from the western end of the Island, at Norton's "Old

Point Comfort House," to the beginning of the Concourse. This portion of the beach is the most generally popular, owing to the number and variety of its places of entertainment and amusement; as well as to the fact, that it is the point to which much the largest number of visitors are brought, both by rail and by steamer. Here is the very elegant and commodious depot of the *Prospect Park and C. I. Railroad* ("Culver's"); from which also runs a branch to Coney Island Point, connecting there with the Iron Steamboat Company's boats for New York. From near this depot, on the east, also runs the *Elevated Railway* to Brighton Beach, the Hotel Brighton and the Brighton Beach Racing Course, etc., as, also, lines of omnibuses plying along the Concourse. Here, also, is "CABLE's," erected in 1875, the first hotel of any importance on Coney Island; the great IRON OBSERVATORY, brought from the Centennial Exposition of 1876, at Philadelphia, through Mr. Culver's enterprise, (and standing three hundred feet above sea-level, provided with a steam-elevator, and equipped with a powerful telescope, affording a forty-mile view of the surrounding land and water); and, near by, stands the "SEA-BEACH PALACE HOTEL," a beautiful and spacious building, formerly occupied by the United States Government at the Centennial Exposition, and now occupied as the depot and hotel of the *New York and Sea-Beach Railway Company*. This company is the only one delivering passengers directly at Coney Island from New York, independently of all other railroad and steamboat companies. Their Long Island landing place is at Bay Ridge, whence passengers are brought direct to West Brighton Beach in the company's own cars. Conspicuous, alike from the land-side, and from the approach by sea, are the two



OBSERVATORY AT WEST BRIGHTON, CONEY ISLAND.

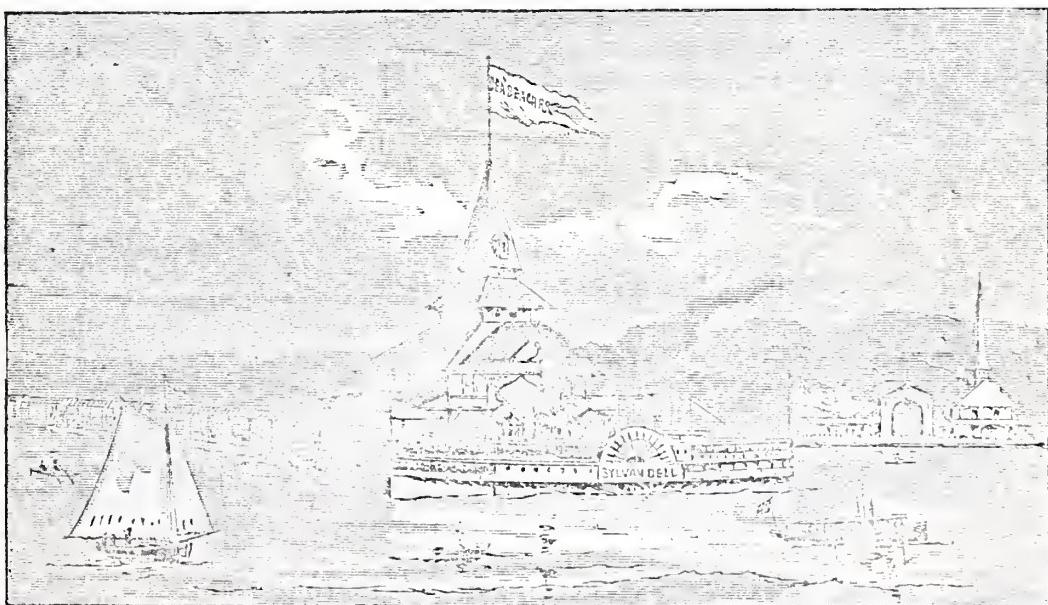




SEA BEACH PALACE HOTEL, WEST BRIGHTON, CONEY ISLAND.

immense iron piers; that of the BRIGHTON PIER AND NAVIGATION Co., reaching out fifteen hundred feet into the ocean ; and that of the OCEAN AND NAVIGATION Co.—both affording, not only a direct means of access to Coney Island for the thousands who visit there by steamboat ; but, with their promenades, restaurants, and other conveniences for visitors, affording an unequalled source of comfort and enjoyment.

“Brighton Beach,” proper—otherwise known as the “Middle,” or “Engeman’s” Division of Coney Island, owes its development to Mr. WILLIAM A. ENGEMAN. Its most prominent feature is the “HOTEL BRIGHTON,” a large and picturesque edifice, capable of accommodating six hundred permanent guests ; connected with which is the depot of the *Brooklyn, Flatbush and C. I. (“Brighton Beach”) Railroad*.

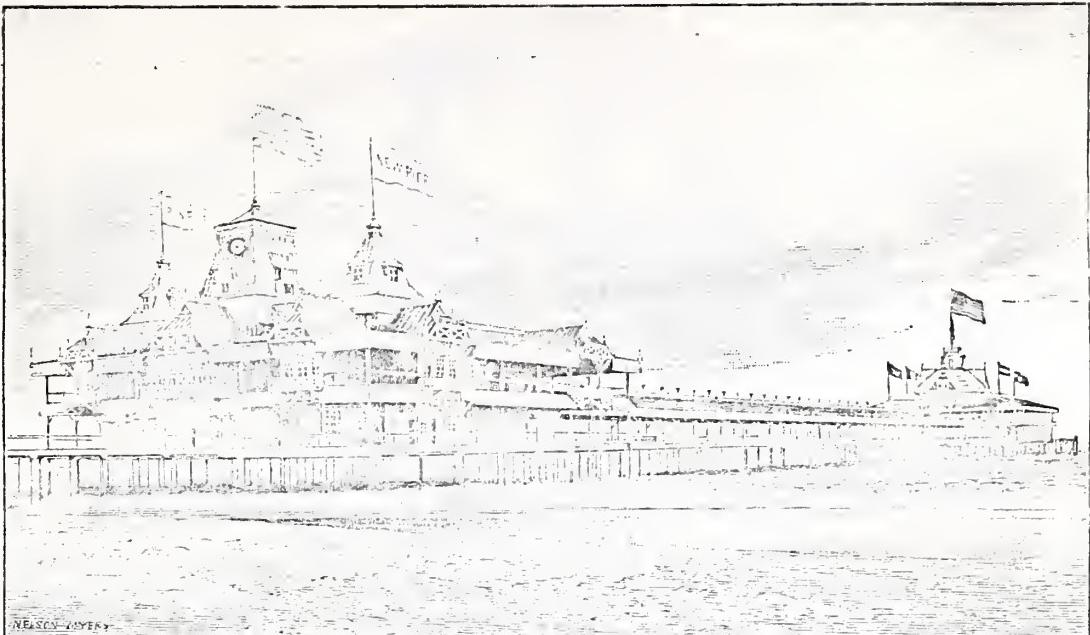


BAY RIDGE LANDING, SEA BEACH R. R.

To particularize the wonderful variety of “side-shows,” games, minstrelsies, “Cheap Johns,” and entertainments of every sort, which have crystallized around West Brighton Beach, would be impossible. It is a veritable Vanity Fair of fun and enjoyment—a Babel of music and of sound—fascinating to Youth and amusing to Age.

Fronting the hotel, the grounds are laid out most tastefully in flower-beds ; and, directly before the main entrance is the music-stand, around which are arranged seats for a large number of people. The afternoon and evening open-air concerts, given here during the season, contribute in no small degree to the popularity of the place. The dining-rooms of this hotel will seat



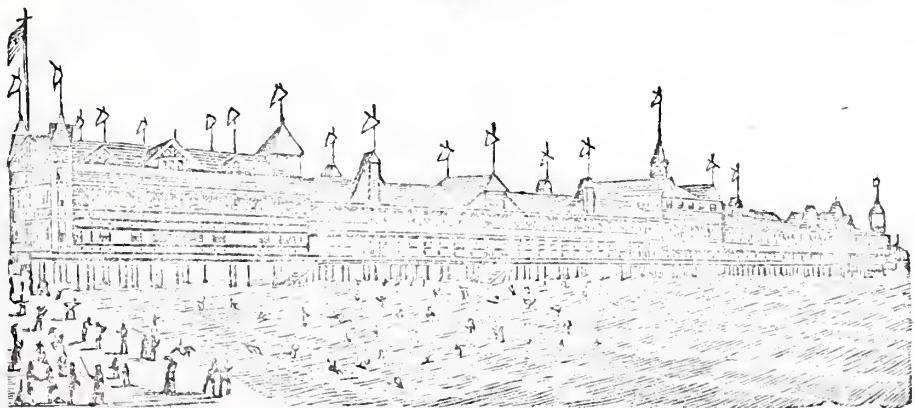


BRIGHTON PIER AND NAVIGATION CO., WEST BRIGHTON, CONEY ISLAND.

1,500, and the *cuisine* is equal to the easy supply of 10,000 guests daily.

Almost on a line with the hotel, and to the east of it, is the great BRIGHTON BEACH BATHING PAVILION. This is 490 feet in length, with 1,230 bathing-rooms on the second floor; and frequently furnishes accommodations for over 6,000 bathers in a single day. Two bridges lead to the beach from the bathing rooms. There are, also, sixteen hot-water bathing-rooms, elaborately and expensively finished; and the entire

York, on the 28th of February, 1840. His father, Anthony Engeman, being in moderate circumstances, was enabled to give the boy only an elementary education. When about twelve years old, young Engeman engaged with a trunk manufacturer in New York, at a salary of two dollars and fifty cents per week. Here he worked, steadily and industriously, for about a year; when, thinking to better his fortunes, he went to Philadelphia; and thence to Camden, where his half-brother (a son of his mother by a former husband) was established as a ship-builder. With him, at Camden and Gloucester, young Engeman worked at shipbuilding; but, the germs of that untiring energy and cease-



OCEAN PIER AND NAVIGATION CO., WEST BRIGHTON, CONEY ISLAND.

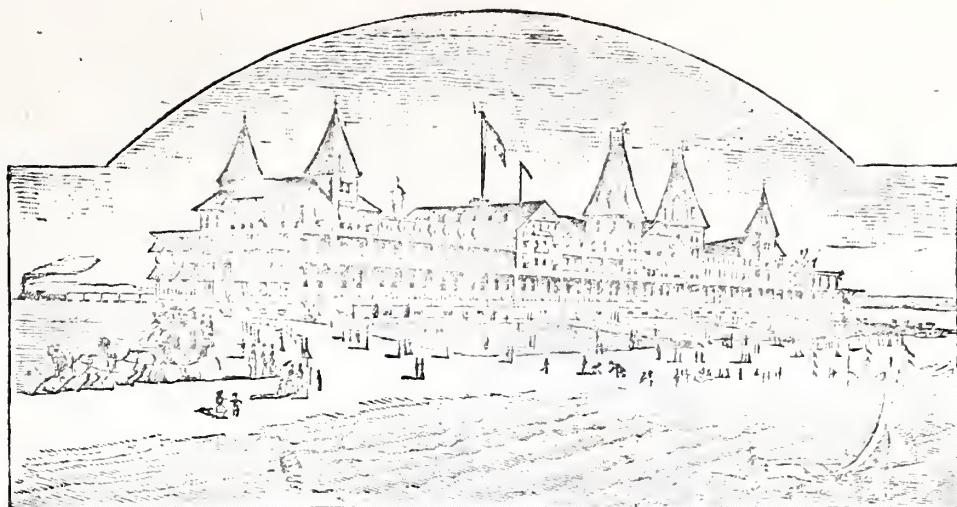
arrangements of this establishment are on the most complete and costly scale. By night it is lit by 8,000 gas jets and 13 electric lights. The lower floor of the Pavilion is devoted to restaurants, "Bunnell's Museum," the Exhibition of the "Brighton Silk Works," and various curious "shows," &c., which help the visitor to while away the time most agreeably.

WILLIAM A. ENGEMAN, the youngest of four children (three sons and a daughter), was born in the City of New

less activity, so characteristic of him in later years, even then urged him to carve for himself a name and place far above, and beyond, the circumscribed limits of a ship-yard; and, after a couple of years service there, he returned to New York.

From thence he went to St. Louis, where he found employment in rafting lumber between that city and Reed's Landing. The excitement and danger attending this business had a peculiar fascination to young Engeman; and, in this employment he passed the summer. But the swamps and stagnant waters, in which part of his time was necessarily passed, superinduced that scourge of new countries,

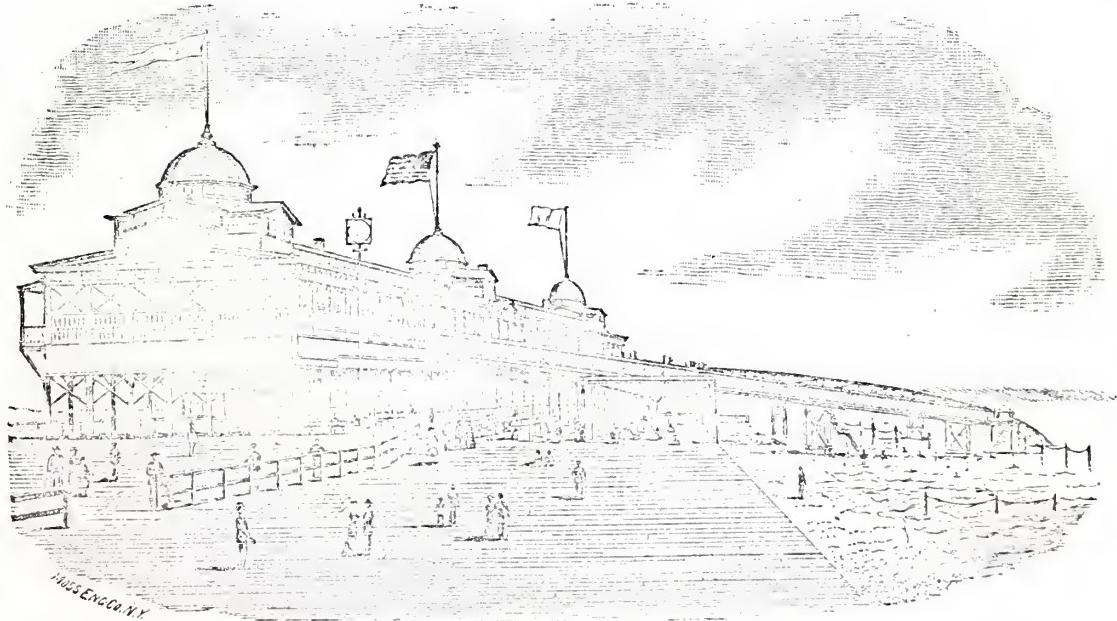




HOTEL BRIGHTON, BRIGHTON BEACH, CONEY ISLAND.

"chills and fever," and in the fall the unacclimated New York boy became sick; his work was over, the season gone by, and he was out of money. But, sick in body as he was, young Engeman was stout of heart, and set off for Cairo, Ill. He found the whole country filled with young men from the East, in search, like himself, of employment, where but little was to be had. Reduced by disease to a mere skeleton, he walked along the bank of the Ohio; his sole companion being a strong, hearty, warm-hearted Irishman—Bob Fullerton by name—who endeavored to cheer

reaching Cairo, Ill., he stopped at Paducah, Ky., where he found employment in repairing the streets—a corporation job. His debilitated condition, however, rendered it impossible for him to continue work; and, in a day or two, he became a deck-hand on a tobacco-boat going up Green River, Ky. After two trips, finding himself too sick to continue, he went again to Cairo, and secured a position as cook on board a trading flat-boat bound to New Orleans. On this boat he remained till about the first of February of the succeeding year, when, with slightly improved health, he en-



BRIGHTON BEACH BATHING PAVILION, CONEY ISLAND.

the boy by kindly words; and, these failing, carried him on his back for miles, only leaving him when young Engeman positively refused to allow this true friend to be burdened with him any further. Now he was alone, and resolved to retrace his steps to the East. Sick, sore, and weary, he made his way back, subsisting by working at the houses he passed, receiving in return such necessities as he needed. The customary rate of compensation for the cutting of sufficient fire-wood for a day's supply for the family was usually a few potatoes, or a "corn-dodger." Before

gaged as cook on the schooner W. W. Harkness, bound from New Orleans to Tabasco, Mexico; the trip lasting about six weeks. While at Tabasco, the officers of the schooner made him carry powder ashore in a market-basket, under pretense of going to do the marketing for the schooner; as, being only a boy, his basket would not be closely scrutinized by the custom-house officers. At night, the mate forced him to accompany him, with a belt around his waist, and his blue shirt above the belt stuffed with cartridge powder, and silk under-clothing—smuggled this way to escape payment of duty.





William F. Enyermo



His natural repugnance to any but open-and-above-board work was in no wise relieved by the tales poured into his ears, of being sent to the Government silver mines, if detected, where he might expect to pass the remainder of his life as a convict; and by the moral certainty that, while the captain and mate were reaping a golden harvest from the transaction, neither would hesitate a moment to sacrifice him to save themselves, should necessity arise. Fortunately, however, the stock was all landed without detection; and the vessel, well loaded for the return voyage, weighed anchor for home. The homeward trip was a terrible one. The vessel, heavily laden with sugar, hides, indigo and coffee, encountered a terrific gale for the whole passage; the sailors were nearly all sick with Chagres fever; and Engeman was obliged to perform the duties of cook, waiter, sailor and do all other kinds of work necessary on shipboard. When, on arrival at New Orleans, the crew were paid off, young Engeman received the princely sum of ten dollars as his full wages for the trip! But, little did he care for that; his health was fully restored, and thus his main object had been accomplished. A day or two found him an omnibus-driver, in the streets of New Orleans, sleeping in a hay-loft in lieu of bed; economizing in every possible way to save sufficient to pay steamboat fare to Fort Smith, Ark., whither he proceeded as soon as financially able. Here he entered the employ of the United States Government in the transportation, by mule trains, of rations to the army stationed at Forts Washita, Arbuckle and Cobb, and Antelope Hills. This was in the summer of 1859, in the fall of which year he engaged in the completion of Fort Cobb (Indian Territory). The following spring and summer he accompanied the government forces in pursuing marauding Indians on the Canadian River; and, the next winter the troops were engaged in hunting up the different tribes at Fort Cobb, Washita River, giving them rations of flour and beef, and in preparing them to settle and farm the fertile lands of the Washita Valley.

Early in the spring of 1861, the government despatched the trains to Fort Belknap, Texas; whence they were ordered to Fort Colorado. Here the different infantry and cavalry companies were gathered together, and from this place they proceeded to Fort Mason.

The civil war had broken out, and Texas Rangers gathered ominously about them; these, in turn, were followed by the Indians, who, at a safe distance in the rear, were laying the country waste. From Fort Mason, the Unionists retreated to San Antonio; from thence to Green Lake, the Rangers following. Green Lake is but a few miles from Powder Horn, from which those who remained faithful to the union cause (among whom was Engeman) took ship for New York, touching at Key West and Cuba on the way. Arrived at New York, Engeman and most of the party proceeded to Washington. Here he was tendered the position of Colonel of the first regiment raised there, by General Holt, to protect the capital. This offer was made on the representations of General Palmer, who had had ample opportunities of knowing our hero's eminent qualifications for such a position. But Engeman refused the offer. Too much of his life had been passed on the frontier to render the tendered position such a one as suited his temperament. With some of his Western comrades, he wished again to go to the frontier. Railroad travel, however, had been so impeded that leaving Washington was not an easy matter. The first attempt the party made was, via the Relay House (between Baltimore and Washington), whence they proposed going to St. Louis. Before reaching the Relay House, however, they were surrounded and captured by the guards, who imagined

them to be rebels engaged in tearing up the railroad tracks.

Their protestations were of no avail, and they were marched back to Washington; and, on Pennsylvania avenue, were in imminent danger of being lynched by a mob. At the critical moment, some of General Palmer's cavalry chanced to be passing, and recognizing their old Texan comrades, saved their lives, and restored them to liberty. So great, however, was the exasperation of the mob, that Engeman and his associates had to be taken to the jail to save them from the fury of the populace. After a few days, when the excitement had somewhat subsided, Engeman and his associates quietly left Washington; and, via Harper's Ferry, proceeded toward St. Louis; narrowly escaping capture, this time by the Confederates, on suspicion of being spies. At St. Louis the party separated, and Mr. Engeman went to Leavenworth, Kansas, and engaged to take government trains to St. Louis, transporting ammunition from the arsenals there to the different armies and steamboats. He was sent from St. Louis to Rolla, Mo., with army wagons to get ready for the battle of Springfield, where the Union forces were beaten, and driven back to Rolla with the loss of Gen. Lyon. From Rolla they were ordered to Sedalia, Mo.; thence to Leavenworth, with all transportation by land. On their way to Leavenworth, at a place called Lone Jack, they were surrounded by guerillas and detained two or three days. Measles broke out among the Union troops, it was snowing furiously, and the only protection for the sick were the government wagons. On the approach of the Irish Brigade from Sedalia, the guerillas left and the brigade escorted the sick and enfeebled remnants of the army to Leavenworth. At Leavenworth, Engeman had charge of all the government wagons during the winter. The following spring he hauled a battery of artillery from Leavenworth to Fort Union, New Mexico, which he left there, and took a large number of government wagons to Denver, Colorado. At Denver, he was offered the entire charge of the government works and corrals, but declined the position and returned to Leavenworth, by way of the Platte River, only one man accompanying him in the dreary ride in an old wagon, through the homes of the Sioux Nation, who, through the scarcity of buffalo meat, had been compelled to use dog's flesh as daily diet. Arriving at Leavenworth, and finding business slack, Engeman proceeded to St. Louis, where he met Mr. George Bell, an old friend, who had charge of all the government corrals at that port, and with whom he engaged as assistant. After being with Mr. Bell a year, the latter went home, leaving Engeman in entire charge and command of all the corrals and animals: the reception, inspection and shipping of all horses and mules purchased for the government at St. Louis for the use of the different Union armies. So varied and onerous were Engeman's duties of inspection here, that five horses, daily, were tired out in succession in carrying him from place to place as his business called him. During his term there Engeman bought and inspected for the government over one million of horses and mules, a larger number, it is believed, than was handled by any other one man. With the close of the war in 1865 this business, of course, ceased. Had Engeman so wished he could readily and honestly have left the government employ a millionaire. But a love for money has never been one of his characteristics, as all who know him will testify.

Domestic difficulties interrupted his enjoyment of life, and made him desirous of seclusion and quiet, after the toils he had undergone. In visiting New York and Brooklyn, he came to Coney Island, and at once was smitten with its beauty, healthfulness and eminent fitness as a place



suitcd to his taste and feeling. Enquiries, made of those who would be likely to know, showed him the tract now known as the Race Track, the Ocean Hotel property, and the Hotel Brighton property; these, together, forming one of the original divisions of Coney Island, known as the Middle Division. This property was purchased from the two or three hundred persons who had, by continued succession of inheritance, come to be the owners; a hotel was erected as a family home and the coveted boon of *quiet* seemed at last to have been secured by Mr. Engeman. But his mind, used to activity, refused the rest he had laid out for himself; and, a year or two later, we find him purchasing the unexpired term of a lease on Coney Island, fronting on the ocean. As an instance of his energy, it should be stated, that the *first ocean pier* was erected here by him; that the idea was conceived on the 29th day of June, and the pier completed, opened for visitors, and doing business on the 4th of July thereafter, although one of the intervening days was Sunday. The building of the *Bathing Pavilion* well serves to illustrate the indomitable energy, and determination to carry out his plans, once matured, so eminently characteristic of Mr. Engeman. When the Hotel Brighton was about being located, and the premises whereon it stands were purchased from Mr. Engeman, an arrangement was made that he should have the exclusive right to erect baths, he paying a percentage on receipts, as an equivalent to the company, therefor.

To accommodate this custom Mr. Engeman erected a two-story and basement bathing pavilion—four hundred feet long, fifty feet wide, two stories high above the basement, with an upper piazza of thirty and a lower piazza of fifty feet wide, extending along the entire front. The basement was divided into kitchen, ice-house, dormitories for employees and several hundred bath-houses, to be used when exigencies required. The main floor was occupied by a spacious dining-hall, bar-room, billiard-room and the various offices necessary. The second floor was devoted to bathers, and contained about one thousand bath-rooms; the entrance to the bathing department on the second floor being by means of a spacious staircase from the main hallway below; and the exit for bathers to the water being by means of a wide bridge whose spacious arch spanned the distance from the front of the second story to the water's edge. The idea of the bath-houses on the second or upper story was novel, and—as the sequel proved—successful.

The building was commenced on the 9th day of May, 1878, on which day the first of the piles on which the building rested was driven. One of the chief difficulties was encountered almost at the outset of the undertaking, when it was ascertained that to have the large structure completed, furnished and equipped in season, would necessitate the getting of lumber and timber on the ground very much more rapidly

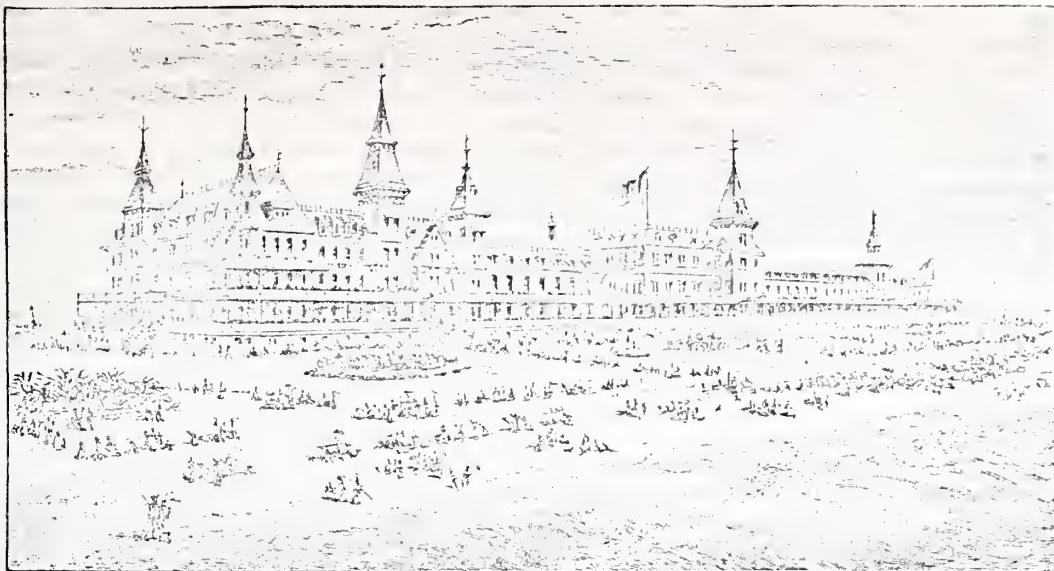
than could be accomplished by any then used method of transportation. But the fertile mind of Mr. Engeman soon overcame this obstacle, and in a most novel method. Aware of the fact that, at certain times of tide, any floating object in the water near the shore would assuredly be thrown up by the waves, he conceived the idea of purchasing worn-out canal-boats, lading them, securing the cargo with hawsers lashed around the entire hull and cargo, and then towing the entire vessel and cargo out of Gowanus Canal, through the Narrows, around Coney Island Point, and fairly out to sea to a point in front of the location of the proposed building; there coming in shore as close as possible, let go of the canal-boat, the tug proceeding homeward and the canal-boat striking the shore, would go to pieces; the lumber and timber drifting on shore at the precise spot needed. Nine times in succession was this unprecedented feat repeated; save that the last canal-boat was beached and unloaded three successive times before it was broken up. It was by the aid of such appliances as these that Mr. Engeman was enabled to complete his building, put in steam-drying apparatus to dry the used bathing dresses, immense ranges in the kitchen, furnish the entire place with not only bath-suits, but with bar and restaurant supplies and furniture—all by the 18th of June, or less than seven weeks from the time of commencing work, a feat certainly unparalleled in the history of the county.

For years the attention of Mr. Engeman had been turned toward making a *race-track* by the sea; and, in the Spring of 1879, his aspirations were realized. With his accustomed energy he had the land surveyed, the track laid out and built on the marsh which formed the rear part of his Coney Island property, with dirt and loam carted from the city's hills—the lumber drawn to the ground by the horse-cars from the city—the grand-stand, field-stand, sheds, paddocks, bars and offices, judges' and timers' stands, and all the equipments of a well-equipped race-course completed for use in an incredibly short time—viz., between the first week in May and the middle of June. In this, as well as the former enterprise, amid every discouragement, his brain conceived and his untiring energy pushed these works forward to completion.

The innumerable privations endured in early life have left their impression on Mr. Engeman's mind and naturally generous and open-hearted character, and have made him very tender toward the weaker sex and toward youth, who can always find in him a sympathizing friend and an earnest adviser. Warm in his friendships, and, by no means implacable in his resentments, he is ever more ready to forgive than to punish. While his liberality has made him hosts of friends, his qualities of mind and heart serve to keep these friends warm and steadfast to his great and varied interests.







MANHATTAN BEACH HOTEL, CONEY ISLAND.

The Eastern section of Coney Island lying between the Ocean and Sheepshead Bay, known in old times as "Sedge Bank," and now as "Manhattan Beach," is reached by the *Marine Railway*, running from the Hotel Brighton—and built on piles the whole distance, thus allowing ingress and egress of the waves, and making travel possible in all weathers.

Manhattan Beach has a sea-front of over two miles, fringed with a fine sandy beach, and presenting an unparalleled view of the Ocean. This section of the Island (as we have already mentioned on page 40) owes its present splendid improvements to the foresight and energy of Austin Corbin, Esq., the well-known banker and railroad magnate. The "MANHATTAN BEACH HOTEL," and the "ORIENTAL HOTEL" (built in 1880, with a view to the especial needs of families as permanent guests), are both unique and imposing struc-

tures—and, from the rear of the latter, the *N. Y. and Manhattan Beach R. R.* connects, by means of its various ramifications (viz.: L. I. R. R., to Flatbush avenue; to Greenpoint and Long Island City, Brooklyn; and to Thirty-fourth street, and foot of Whitehall and Pine streets, New York City), with the cities of New York and Brooklyn. The Excursion and Picnic Pavilion, the mammoth Bathing Pavilion, Music Stands, etc., which form the necessary adjuncts of these two large hotels, surrounded as they are with extensive walks, lawns and flower-beds, laid out in the most exquisite style of the landscape gardener's art, form—with the ocean view, and the inland view, beyond Sheepshead Bay—a *tout-ensemble* of most surpassing attractiveness.

The railroad facilities for reaching Coney Island will be found fully described in our chapter on *Railroads and Travel in Kings County*.



ORIENTAL HOTEL, MANHATTAN BEACH, CONEY ISLAND.



**JOHN Y. MCKANE.**—It is certainly fortunate for the town of Gravesend, beset as it is, on all sides, by grasping monopolies; and flooded on all days of the week, during four months of the year, by the population of the neighboring cities, that its principal town-officer is “to the manor-born,” conversant with all its wants and mindful of all its vested interests; and that he is a man of nerve, of tact and of honesty. Such a man is Supervisor McKane. He is of that excellent North-of-Ireland (Scotch-Irish) stock, which for the two past centuries has furnished so valuable an element to our American population. He was born August 10, 1841, in the County Antrim, Ireland; and, when fifteen months old, was brought by his mother to Gravesend, where his father had preceded them by a few months. His earliest education was at the Gravesend district-schools; and, from the age of eight to sixteen years, he was occupied in working in the garden, digging clams, and all the employments which usually make up a country-boy’s life. When sixteen years of age, he commenced to learn the carpenter’s trade with Abraham J. Van Dyke, of Flatbush, remaining with him for a year until Mr. Van Dyke went West. He then went to work with William Vause, builder, of Flatbush, for another year, when his old “boss” returned, and John resumed his apprenticeship with him, remaining with him four or five years. Then, in 1866, he commenced on his own account as carpenter and builder in the village of Sheepshead Bay, Gravesend. His first public office was that of Constable, which he held for one year. Then he was elected one of the Commissioners of Common Lands for a term of seven years. Then he was chosen Supervisor of the town, of which he is now serving his third, two-year, term. Since its present organization, in 1883, he has been President of the County Board of Supervisors. The confidence which the people of Gravesend repose in Mr. McKane is evidenced by the number and varied character of the offices of public trust with which they have invested him. He is a Police Commissioner; President of the Town Board; President of the Board of Health; President of the Police Board, and President of the Water Board. He is also, by election of the Police Board, the Chief of Police, having under his control 150 police, 20 of whom are regular town police, the balance being specials, during the “Coney Island season.”

In addition to these public duties, he carries on an extensive business as a builder, having built (with the exception of the Manhattan Beach, Oriental and Brighton) nearly all the hotels, and two-thirds of all the other buildings on Coney Island, as well as in the town of Gravesend. He has long been a consistent member and supporter of the Methodist Episcopal church of Sheepshead Bay; and has been, for seventeen years, the faithful Superintendent of its Sabbath-school. He is a member of Franklin Lodge, I. O. O. F., and has held all the offices within its gift. He is also a member of the Mutual Benefit Society, Odd Fellows.

Mr. McKane was married, in 1865, to Fanny, daughter of Capt. Cornelius B. and Maria (Coles) Nostrand, of Gravesend, by whom he has a pleasant little family of three boys and a daughter. His venerable parents reside in Sheepshead Bay, happy in the respect and confidence which they see reposed in their son by their fellow-citizens.

Despite the number of official honors enjoyed by Supervisor McKane, he is no politician. A democrat by preference, he has never felt himself bound by, nor has he ever been elected on, strict party-lines. A friend, who has known him long and well, writes to us of him, thus:

“The life of Supervisor McKane, the struggles through which he has passed, and the difficulties which he has over-

come in order to reach his present position of honor and influence, are well calculated to bring out, in strong relief, those sterling qualities of character which have brought him into such worthy prominence among his fellow-citizens.

One marked characteristic of Mr. McKane is his thorough honesty of purpose. This is conceded by persons of every political faith, if they give an honest expression of opinion.

As the highest officer of the town, he has ever seemed most anxious that all his public acts should tell for the benefit of his constituents; and we believe the man is yet to be found who can justly point his finger at a single instance wherein he has sinned, or in any way compromised, his official integrity. While his public position and influence would give him abundant opportunity to enrich himself, if he so desired, by winking at the violation of law, and by other questionable means, yet we do not believe he ever addled to his possessions one dollar of unlawful gain.

Those who have known Mr. McKane longest and best cannot fail to notice that courage and perseverance are also marked traits of his character. When once convinced that a certain course of action is right and in the line of duty, he does not hesitate to advance on that line in spite of political opposition, and the probability of making political enemies. We can say of him what we wish could be said of every public man, he is not afraid to do right. We fully believe him incapable of political intrigue, bribery or fraud.

He has nipped in the bud many a conspiracy to violate the law, and has spoiled many a little scheme of the gambling fraternity at Coney Island, which, if he had been willing to pass unnoticed, would have brought him no small gain. But he would spurn wealth that must be gained in this way, at the expense of his honour. His physical courage is as marked as his moral; no threats of political destruction or physical violence deter him, for a moment, as chief of police, from bringing the strong hand of the law to bear upon every form of iniquity which is properly brought to his notice. He also generally accomplishes what he undertakes. His perseverance is such as to overcome all obstacles in his way. To this is owing, in no small degree, his rapid rise from the humble position of his childhood, to the highest honors in the gift of his fellow-townsmen.

But above all else, stands the modesty and grace of a Christian character. The demands which his position make upon him every day in the week, render it specially difficult to live in strict observance of all religious duties, as would be most congenial to him if he were master of his own time; but, in all his busy life as a master builder, he has made it a point never to yield to the many solicitations to do business on the Sabbath. That day, he has said, should be reserved for his own personal duties, and as a day of rest.

He is also tender-hearted, and generous to a fault. We venture to say that he fills to-day more official positions than any other man in Kings Co. The present County Board of Supervisors have proved their confidence in him by electing him president *pro tem.* of their honorable body; and, indeed, he seems to have been the only man in the Board upon whom both political parties were willing to unite.

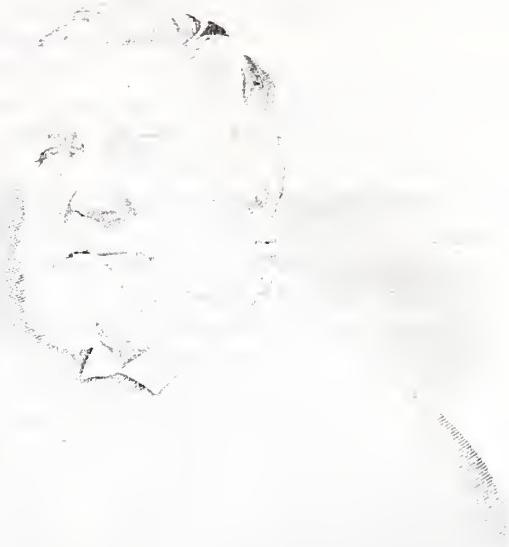
His official life has been untarnished, and his private life above reproach. We do not for a moment suppose him to be above all the mistakes and frailties of human nature. That he has done some things in public and private life which he regrets we have no doubt, but, as a public man, we believe him to be honestly striving to do his duty; and in his most trying position we believe no man could do better, or more wisely administer the responsible trust conferred upon him by his fellow-citizens.”





John Yelkune





Edw. Ridley



**EDWARD RIDLEY.**—The life and career of Mr. Ridley is an example of what may be attained by a well-balanced, vigorous mind, united with enterprise, energy, industry and integrity; characteristics which form the character of a successful merchant, and which, if possessed by a young man in the beginning of his business career, are equivalent to wealth, for they are sure to bring wealth. A discriminating writer has said, "Love of business, and capacity to conduct business, stand next to affluence."

These qualities entered largely into the character of Mr. Ridley—a character which needs no eulogistic language to array it for publication; for it is its own eulogist, speaking from a conspicuous position founded on a well-spent life. It would, therefore, be injured by any words of adulation.

But a virtuous life demands our reverence; public and private worth, our admiration; long and practical usefulness, our gratitude; therefore, in referring to one whose life fairly elicits these sentiments, it is an act of justice to conscientiously and honestly speak of him as those who knew him best would and do speak. If he possessed rare, commendable, or even brilliant endowments, it is not adulation or undue eulogy, in writing his memoir, to give him all the credit they deserve; it is but speaking the language of truth and soberness.

This leads us to say that Mr. Ridley's character as disclosed in the record of his life, may be described as follows, and we believe all who knew him will say it is a true mental portrait of him.

His moral and intellectual qualities were in harmony; his principles commanded the respect of the great commercial community in which he lived; his private virtues attracted the affection and regard of his friends. He was modest, claimed no merit, assumed no importance and never alluded to the wealth he had acquired. He was charitable, not impulsively bestowing his means without discrimination, but with judicious selection, and from a sense of duty. His economy was exact, but liberal; the recipients of his bounty were numerous. He had a high sense of justice, and the claims of humanity. His religion was a part of his being, and displayed itself in the uniform tenor of his life. He acted under the habitual conviction of accountability; his feelings were always under the control of his will, hence he was never guilty of those extravagances of conduct which too often mar the career of men in conspicuous positions.

He was tenacious in his friendships—equally so, we believe, in his enmities. Having once had good cause to doubt a man's sincerity or integrity, he never after fully trusted him. His disposition was cheerful—his conversation instructive and entertaining. Whatever were his faults—for he was human and, of course, possessed the weaknesses and frailties of human nature—they were overshadowed by his virtues.

Few men ever assimilated themselves so easily and

naturally to the detail of business as he did; few men were more evenly balanced or self-controlled under the sudden emergencies and vicissitudes of the commercial world than he; if the tide was against him, he breasted it courageously and hopefully; if in his favor, he was calm and complaisant.

Such we believe to be the characteristics of Edward Ridley; given without embellishment, with rigid adherence to truth. It will now be our pleasant duty to briefly trace his life and career from its beginning to the time when summoned by death to the unseen world.

He was born in Leicester, England, in the year 1816, and was a lineal descendant of Bishop Ridley, who, with his brother-martyr Latimer, suffered at the stake for his inflexible adherence to those principles which his conscience assured him were right.

Mr. Ridley's father was James Mosley Ridley, gentleman; held in high esteem for those inbred qualities that qualified him for the respectable position he held in the place of his nativity, that of an accomplished English gentleman. Among his most intimate friends was Sir Edward Wilde, so well known in the English history of that day.

His mother was a lady, in every respect qualified for the wife of a man like James Ridley.

As Mr. Ridley desired his son to enter the legal profession, he was carefully educated, and taught those religious principles which imbued his whole life. As his father was a member of the Church of England, he was reared under the teachings of that church.

There was much in the youth of young Ridley that gave indication of future eminence; but, as he advanced in years it became apparent that the tendencies of his mind were leading him to the calling of a merchant, and not to the bar. Still, he was a constant and an appreciative student, devoting his leisure hours to books.

With considerable reluctance his father assented to his choice of business; and, according to the custom of England, he was apprenticed to a highly respectable merchant. Having completed his mercantile education, he began business in his native town under prosperous circumstances; but, by the failure of business houses whose paper he had endorsed to a large extent, he was obliged to suspend. After honorably settling with his creditors, with the means he had left, he emigrated to this country and became a resident of Albany.

Here he began business as a dry goods merchant, attaining such success that he was enabled to establish a branch at Saratoga. He was then but 30 years of age, and the management of these two concerns was a severe test upon his business ability. But he was equal to the emergency, and success attended both houses. At length his enterprising spirit induced him to look for a more extended field of exertion, directing his attention to the City of New York, that metropolis



which, while it affords great facilities for amassing wealth, presents gigantic difficulties in doing so.

Accordingly he drew his business at Albany and Saratoga to a close, and early in the year 1849, became a competitor for commercial prosperity and wealth in New York. He entered upon his career in a careful and unpretending way, in Grand street. His store, when first opened, was 12x30 feet in extent; but his business gradually increased from this small beginning to be the most extensive and successful in the city.

It would be the work of supererogation to describe in detail his mercantile career. That he attained distinguished success and great wealth by his singular business accomplishments and honorable dealing, succinctly describes it. It may not, however, be improper to add that the establishment of which Mr. Ridley was at the head at the time of his death, occupies four and one-half acres of ground, bounded by Grand, Allen and Orchard streets, and that in it 1,700 persons found and still find employment.

In 1879, Mr. Ridley returned to England for the purpose of discharging some debts which he left when he came to this country. The fidelity to conscience which governed him in the payment of those debts most truthfully describes his real character. It is not strange that such a man should become an ornament to the mercantile world, a stalwart pillar in the business fabric of the metropolis.

Mr. Ridley was twice married; first to Miss Elizabeth Smith, of Leicester, England, Oct. 23d, 1837. There were born to this marriage five children, three sons and two daughters—James Mosley, Albert and Arthur John, Fannie Louise, and Emma Elizabeth, all of whom are living except James M., who died several years ago. His two sons, Albert and Arthur, were his partners under the firm name and style of "EDWARD RIDLEY & Sons." The latter continue the business.

Mr. Ridley's first wife died in 1863. In January, 1865, Mr. Ridley was united by marriage to Caroline Wilhelmina Yevance, of Philadelphia. His marriage relations appear to have been happy.

Most of the time during his second marriage, Mr. Ridley was subject to attacks of that fatal disease, apoplexy, which finally terminated his life; and it was only by the most tender care, faithful and untiring watchfulness, that the fatal stroke was so long averted.

To his second marriage there was born one daughter, Clara W. Ridley, born July 25th, 1867, a young lady of many accomplishments, most tenderly attached to her father, an attachment which was mutual.

In his circle of home life Mr. Ridley was chivalric in devotion and inexhaustible in affection. His elegant home at Gravesend was a pleasing retreat from the wearing cares and labors of Grand street. This had been his home for over seventeen years; a home built and furnished, its grounds beautified under the superin-

tendence of Mrs. Ridley, with special regard to his health and comfort.

He usually reached his store about eleven o'clock in the forenoon; leaving it at six P. M. in his carriage. After the opening of the great bridge he crossed it every day, morning and evening, down to about the time of his death, reaching his home after a drive of over seven miles. As he left all the cares and responsibilities of his business in Grand street, his home to him was like another world—a world of peace, quiet and rest, and we may well say of happiness. Here he found time to study the contents of a library which he had collected with the judgment and taste of a scholar.

The discipline of his early education, ripened by contact with the world, rendered him an appreciative and critical reader of books. Not long after he came to this country, he united with the Methodist Episcopal Church, sincerely attached to it by conviction but without bigotry in head or heart.

In 1874 he was ordained a minister in that church, but his ministrations seem to have been confined, especially during the absence of the pastor, to the church at Parkville, of which he was a member and the principal founder. He occupied its pulpit on the Sunday before his death, and preached for nearly an hour with great earnestness and much interest to his auditors.

He was one of the most industrious of men; would leave his business in New York, and return to his home; and, after a pleasant reunion with his family, he would seek his study, where he often remained engaged until a late hour.

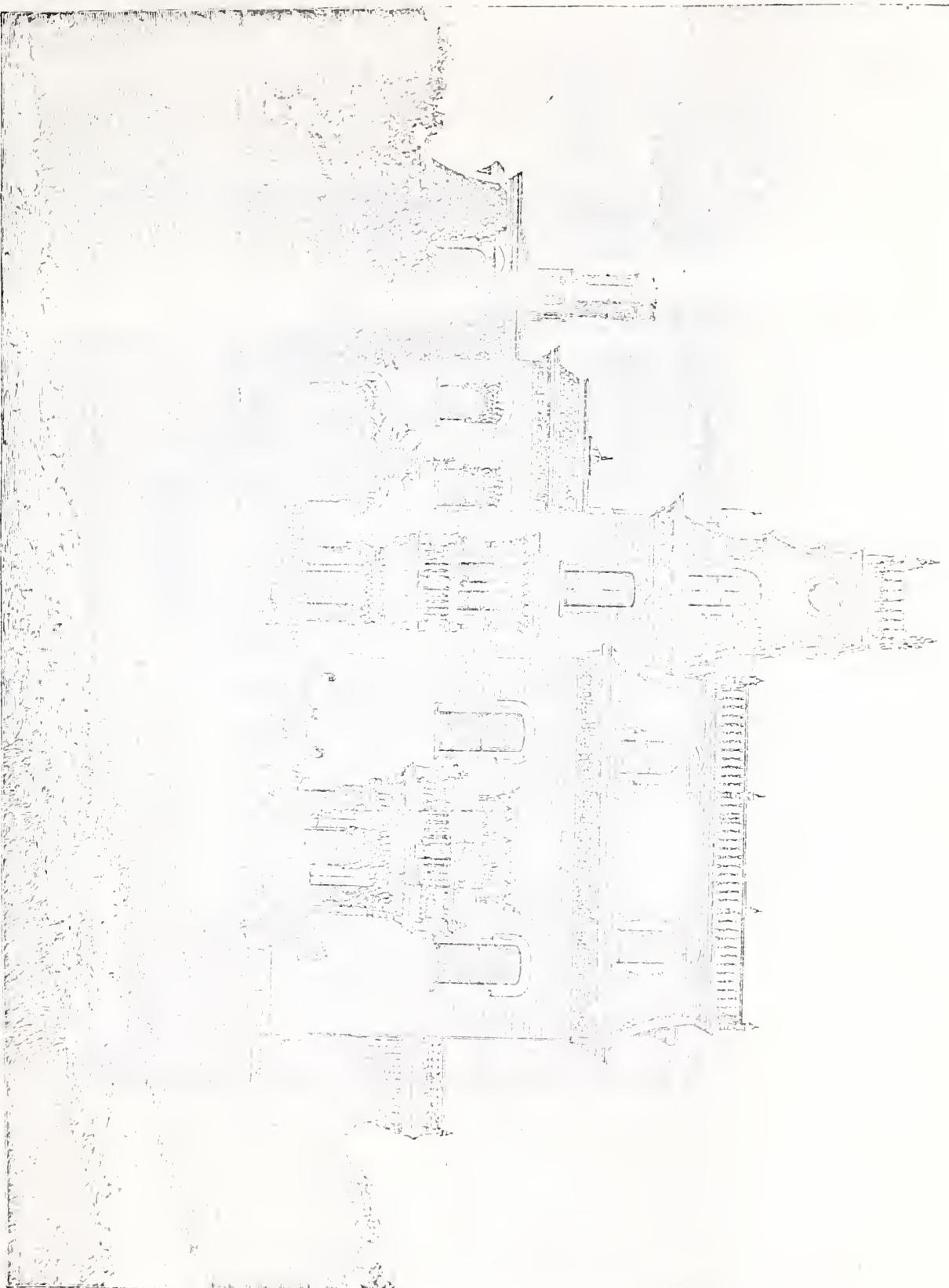
He was fond of music, especially sacred music. Every evening, before his family retired, with the accustomed family worship, he would unite with them in singing his favorite hymn—"Nearer my God to thee." This was repeated on the night in which, before the dawning of another day, he saw the last of earth, with singular solemnity and with something of a premonition of the sad event so soon to follow.

Mr. Ridley's death was very sudden and unexpected. On Monday afternoon he left Grand street, at the usual hour, for his home, apparently in his usual health. After spending the evening with his family, he retired. He remained in bed a half hour, when he arose, as Mrs. Ridley believed, for some purpose connected with his library, as he occasionally did. A brief time elapsed, when she was startled by his groans; she hastened to him, reaching him only in time to listen to the utterance of a few affectionate parting sentences, and to his declaration that he was dying.

It needs no words of ours to describe, if we could, the bitter anguish that thus suddenly fell upon this happy household.

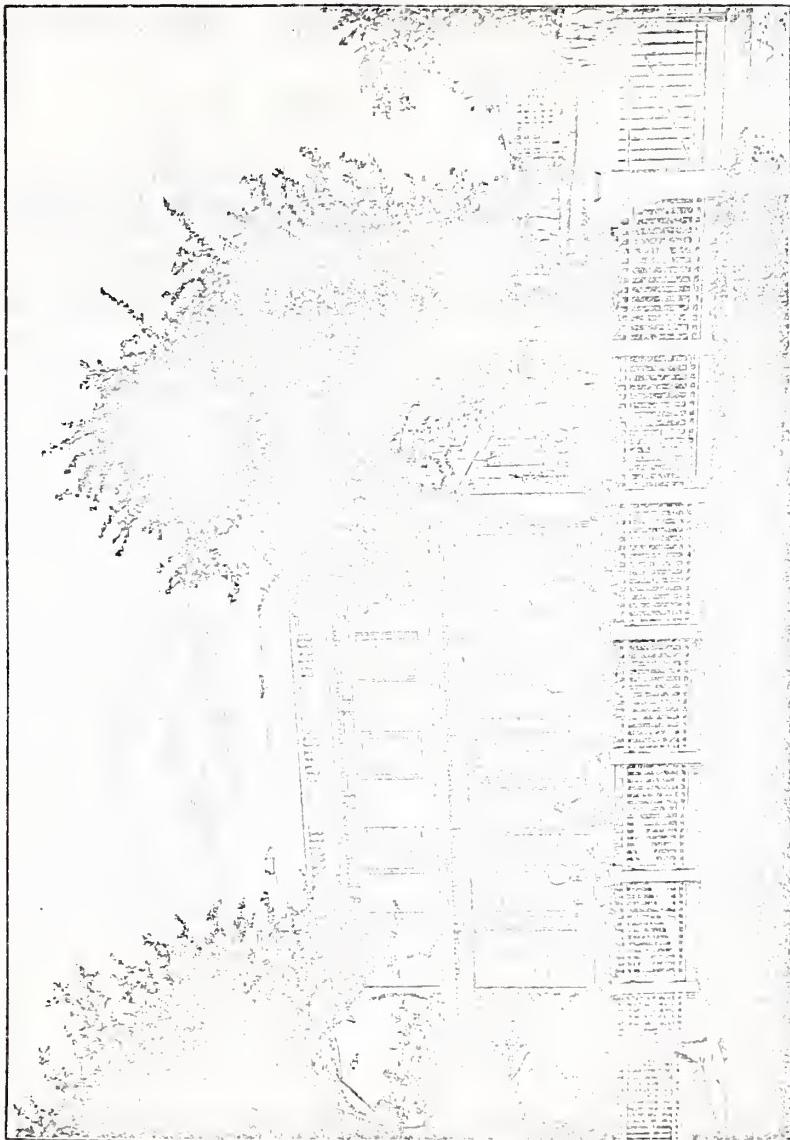
Thus lived and thus died Edward Ridley. We cannot conclude our sketch of him in more appropriate language than that contained in the following beautiful tribute paid to his memory by another.





RESIDENCE OF THE LATE EDWARD RIDLEY.





RESIDENCE OF THE LATE EDWARD RIDLEY.



"He had none of the pride of wealth or the arrogance of aristocracy; though giving largely to the church he never did so in a manner to inspire thoughts that he considered himself above others. During the many years that he passed at Gravesend, he never departed from his charming Christian simplicity; and, by everyone who knew him, he was looked up to more for his many virtues than his great riches. Even in matters of importance he was inclined rather to have others express their will than insist upon his own opinion. To his sons he has left an inheritance in his example of a good life, far richer and better than the munificent behests they received from him."

WILLIAM H. STILLWELL, a lineal descendant, in the eighth generation, of Nicholas Stillwell, the emigrant of 1638, was born at Gravesend, L. I., June 28, 1832, where he received such elementary education as the district-school there then afforded. At the age of nineteen, he accepted a position as teacher of the district-school at Grassy Pond, Queens County, and, in succession, in the schools at Gravesend Neck and Gravesend Village. Having taught himself the elements of land-surveying, he gradually worked himself into a considerable practice as a land-surveyor. This extended, in time, till he came to be recognized as an authority on matters connected with his profession. Elected by his neighbors to the position of Justice of the Peace, for several successive terms, he left that office with a clear record as an upright, honest, fearless official. In 1857 he was chosen as clerk at the Alms-house department, which position he filled for seven years, during which time it was his province to examine and audit all bills, which amounted to some three hundred thousand dollars per annum in value; and, on his retirement, his employers unanimously gave him a certificate in which they bear witness to his fidelity to his trust, by saying that his accounts were "invariably correct in every respect." He next built and established a grocery store at Unionville, which he kept with moderate success for a year or more. During all this while, he occupied his leisure moments in studying law under the general direction of Hon. Philip S. Crooke, and for which his term of service as Justice had given him a decided taste. Having been admitted to practice he removed to Brooklyn, and there opened an office. He has been en-



WILLIAM H. STILLWELL.

gaged in various matters of local enterprise, notably the purchase of the Manhattan Beach property, and perfecting the title thereto. In 1874, he accepted a position in the Corbin Banking Company's office, No. 61 Broadway, New York, where he remained for four years; when he exchanged it for a better position with William A. Engeman, on Coney Island; retaining, however, his Brooklyn office. His chief characteristic—unflinching honesty and integrity—has won him hosts of friends, while his intimate knowledge of all matters pertaining to real-estate in Gravesend, make his services much sought after by those who are interested. He is pleasant and social, yet domestic troubles have caused him to prefer solitude. His genealogical notes on the family whose name he bears, attest his aptitude for close, diligent, painstaking attention to details and office work. He has, also, in manuscript, a nearly completed *History of Coney Island*, of great antiquarian research and historical merit; of which the editor of this work has, by his kind permission, largely availed himself, and which, we trust, will be published, at no distant day.

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